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MILTON'S
LAMENT FOR DAMON

MILTON'S LAMENT FOR DAMON

AND HIS OTHER LATIN POEMS

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH

BY

WALTER SKEAT

Sometime Scholar of CHRIST'S COLLEGE

WITH PREFACE AND INTRODUCTIONS

BY

E. H. VISIAK

Author of MILTON AGONISTES

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PREFACE

I

IN these poems Milton reveals himself with a frankness which is due partly to the ingenuousness of youth. It is also due—conjointly with the peculiar self-expressiveness of his nature—to the circumstance that he was writing in Latin, to the fact that his thoughts were veiled in what has been called the ‘decent obscurity of a dead language’.

It is true that both *Elegies* and *Silvae*¹ included familiar epistles and undergraduate ‘prolusions’, and might on that score be regarded as their own apologia for such frankness; yet, even so, it is extremely unlikely, if they had been written in English, that Milton would have allowed them to be published, as he actually did, during his lifetime. In his English poems, except in one or two of the sonnets, the directly personal element is modulated into a different key, and definitely private matters are never included. From a biographical point of view, therefore, these Latin poems are exceedingly and especially important.

They have been comparatively little read; and it is owing to this neglect, together with the neglect of Milton’s pamphlets, with their deeply human and humane personal revelations, that their author’s character is misunderstood. It has been misrepresented, and still suffers misrepresentation, through the hybrid influence of his earlier political and sectarian enemies and his Victorian friends. Vilification and false idealization have confederated, while some monumental biographers almost came to bury Milton while they praised him.

To retrieve his Latin poems from the obscurity into which they have fallen by presenting them in an adequate and graphic English rendering, would be, in general, to provide an avenue of approach to a genuine portrait of

¹ A collection of fugitive pieces.

Milton; to a *self-portrait*, charming and spontaneous, of his complex personality: would be to reveal him in the quite early years of his development before he suffered catastrophic change. Nor can the nature of that change be understood, or its grandeur fully appreciated, without the means of this preliminary observation.

II

It is, in fact, their autobiographical and anticipative poetical qualities which give these Verses their unique value. As will appear from the translations, they are unequal (the Latin is not impeccable, nor even free from false quantities). They include considerable arid tracts, in association with passages of imaginative power and beauty. For they were composed at a time when Milton, to use his own phrase, was *letting his wings grow*.

The method which has been followed in these translations is necessarily a novel one. Milton's Latin verse is condensed; his English verse extraordinarily expansive. It is impossible to render his Latin poems in a conventional line-for-line translation without considerable loss of content and modification of meaning; so that even Cowper's attempt to do so only produced what is, in the main, a really fine paraphrase. Accordingly, the model employed, for the most part, is the *Lycidas* measure, which takes the form of what Masson calls 'free musical paragraphs', with a liberal use of Milton's favourite device, the broken melody of the half-line.

In order to suggest the Miltonic atmosphere, words and phrases of Milton's own usage have been welded into, and tempered in, these translations. A few of Milton's favourite spellings, and a free use of capital letters, are retained, and quotation marks omitted, for the same reason.

The line-numbers in the margin are meant to help those who wish to consult the Latin text.

E. H. V.

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A BOOK OF ELEGIES

ELEGY I

(Date 1626. April or May. Age· Seventeen.)

CHARLES DIODATI, who was of Italian descent on his father's side, was Milton's dearest and most intimate friend: his *alter ego*, as he called him. He was about Milton's own age; and they had become acquainted at St. Paul's School, which Diodati left for Trinity College, Oxford, three years before Milton went to Christ's College, Cambridge.

Diodati was training for his father's profession of medicine, but he had a scholarly bent. There is a copy of Latin Alcaics by him in a volume of Oxford Verses, and he wrote to Milton in Greek. Two of his letters, in Greek, are in the British Museum; and in the second of these, which may well have been the very one that prompted this Elegy, Diodati, writing from the country, says that he is very happy, on the whole, but rather misses intellectual companionship. He advises Milton not to 'tie himself night and day to his books'.

'I, in all things else your inferior,' he concludes, 'am superior to you in this, that I know a measure in my labours.'

From Milton's side in the record of their friendship, we have the first and sixth Elegies, the two *Epistolae Familiares*, and the *Epitaphium Damonis*.

Diodati seems to have been altogether a delightful personality: shrewd, quick-witted, whimsical; the humanistic counterpart to Milton's aloof sublimity. As an undergraduate he was, no doubt, popular from the first, while it took some time before Milton (in his nephew Philips's words) was 'loved by the whole university'.

If Diodati had lived, he would surely have made an agreeable physician, and a most able minister to the mind of the tragic genius from whose side he was snatched away by untimely death, as duly related in the preface to the *Lament for Damon*.

The most important points in the Elegy are Milton's satirical allusion to his brief rustication from Cambridge, which at that early period he so much disliked; the pleasure he took in writing poetry; his love for the theatre, at which with characteristic abandonment he yielded himself to the emotions of the play, distilling on Aristotle's principle of catharsis the essence of sublimated

passion; his contempt for the legal profession; and, lastly, the naïve revelation of his susceptibility to female charm.¹

With regard to Milton's rustication, the brevity of its period, which did not entail the loss of a single term, makes it clear that the offence which brought it about was very slight—in all probability, a characteristically outspoken difference with his tutor, William Chappell. It was recognized that Milton could not work with Chappell—and also that he was too promising a student to be allowed to suffer on this account. Upon his return to Cambridge, therefore, he was given another tutor, Nathaniel Tovey. But he was not happy in his early days at Cambridge; he was too complex and distinctive by nature to be popular at first; and besides, there were the derisive stalwarts who nicknamed him 'the Lady'.

The erotic sentiment is diverted into a patriotic flight when Milton compares those 'maiden quires' to the vaunted beauties of old time and all contemporary nations, much to the latter's disadvantage; but returns to earth at the close. The 'blind boy' is beginning to be restive, and it is as well that this fascinating period of exile is near its end.

Summoning to the aid of his imagination the 'divine Moly', Milton is preparing for his return to the University. He has neutralized the spell; and this was the poem's real function—the disturbing thoughts of those Cynthian charms and graces, of that alluring parade of suburban demi-goddesses—who reappear in his sixth Elegy. Thus, he welcomes the chance of escaping from the dangerous vicinity—showing himself, in this respect, wiser than he proves to be on a subsequent occasion.

To Charles Diodati

LATE comes thy letter, friend—but every sheet
 Doth herald-like repeat
 Thy words, dispatch'd from England's western verge,
 Where Chester's Dee doth merge
 Her hurrying flood in the Vergivian brine.²

¹ Maturely expressed in *P.L.*, Book VIII, lines 528–59.

² Irish Sea.

5

Lat. 5

Far regions owe that witty friend of mine—
Soon render'd at behest.

Now I where Thames doth this great City lave
With brimm'd refluctuant wave,

In my dear native haunts exulting dwell; 10
Nor reedy Camus' spell,

Nor my lov'd 'Rooms' late interdict,¹ doth fret:
Bare, naked fields forgot

Of softer shades afford no proper spot
For Phoebus' priests; nor yet

Always I'd bear the austere Master's threat— 15
And more, my mind brooks not!

If 'banish'd' at paternal hearth I lead
Glad leisur'd hours, care-freed,

An outlaw's name and fate I'll not despise,
But 'to be banish'd' prize!

Had Tomis' 'banish'd' Bard² who liv'd forlorn
No heavier trials borne.

Would he have yielded aught to Homer's praise,
Or vanquish'd Virgil's bays?

Here may I dedicate whene'er I chuse, 25
Free hours to the quiet Muse:

Each book I live by, allⁱ my mind inspires.
Me overply'd, then draws

The curving theatre's show, and all my applause
The rattling stage requires:

Now speaks some grey-beard Rogue, some wastethrift Heir,
 Suitor, or Soldier, bare 30

Of helm; some Counsel, flown with ten-year case,
In court devoid of grace

Thunders his Norman jargon of the laws.³

2 Ovid.

³ 'The Norman gibberish of the laws'—Cowper.

Or Slave's sly help, that's lent
 To enamour'd Son, throws hard Sire off the scent,
 Or Maids, new fires that prove, 35
 Of love naught knowing, yet—unknowing—love.
 Next, passionate Tragedy sways
 Her gory wand: wild-hair'd with rolling eyes,
 I watch her agonize;
 For somehow, though to gaze begetteth grief,
 Yet gazing gives relief;
 Some bitter sweetness oft my tear allays: 40
 As when, in piteous wise
 The ill-starr'd youth,¹ his love-dream shatter'd, dies
 Ere tasted Hymen's bliss;
 Or when from forth night's shades, the Styx recrost,
 Some dread, avenging ghost²
 Sounds with death-torch the depth of sin's abyss
 In guilty hearts that lies;
 Or Troy's illustrious Line, or Pelops', weep, 45
 Or Kreon's House that met
 Of her incestuous sires the monstrous debt.
 Nor pent at home I keep,
 Or in City: not for me is lost the flow
 Of Mays that come and go.
 A park invites, where elms close-neighbouring grow, 50
 And grove's suburban shade
 Renown'd; where thou shalt mark thee, maid by maid,
 Glide past the virgin quires.
 Star-like they shine, forth-breathing softest fires:
 Whence some much-marvell'd charm
 Hath smote me oft, that might (as me appears)
 Make Jove forget his years!
 Alas, how oft have I seen eyes whose light 55
 Surpass'd the diamond bright,
 Or what clear lamps around earth's axle gleam;
 Necks, too, whose ivory white

¹ Romeo?² The ghost in *Hamlet*, or Banquo's in *Macbeth*.

Might well outgrace a twice-liv'd Pelops' arm,
 Or e'en that Lacteal Stream
 Which with translucent nectar tinged doth flow;
 Captiving¹ curve of brow;
 Soft-waving locks that weave the golden net 60
 Which wily Love shall set;
 Allure of cheeks that Hyacinthus' glow
 To tarnish'd turn, and pale
 The sheen, Adonis, of thy flower's vermeil!
 Now (tho' oft-sung) give place
 Ye demi-goddesses! all Shapes of Love
 That lur'd that gadding Jove:
 Tower'd heads of the House of Persia's ancient race; 65
 Dwellers in Susa old,
 And Nineveh, great Memnon's Orient Hold!²
 Your haughty ensigns ground,³
 Greek nymphs and Trojan maids!—ye Roman, too:
 Let not with boast undue
 Your Bard who dwelt by Tarpe's Rock⁴ resound
 His 'Pompey's Portico',
 And 'stoiles Ausonian' that his theatres throng: 70
 The supreme bays belong
 To Britain's daughters! Ye outland damsels, thank
 If next to these ye rank!
 And London—thou whom Trojan hands did found—⁵
 Whom crowns, conspicuous far,
 That fame of Towers which thy adornment are,
 Rejoice that naught's to show 75
 Of beauty in this pendulous orb below,
 But doth in Thee abound!
 Nor are more sparkling stars in Heav'n's serene
 Around Diana seen
 (Ministrant bebies) than, with gold bedight

¹ Captiving, as *SA* 33, 694.³ In modern phrase 'lower your colours'.⁵ As in the Brutus legend.² This was Susa, not Nineveh.⁴ Ovid.

And beauty's lovely light,
Those maids that all thy thoroughfares make bright. 80
Hither came Venus fair
Erstwhile ('tis held), drawn by her yoked pair
Of doves, while momentarily
About her flew her quiver'd soldiery;
For this, from Cnidos turn'd,
And that irriguous vale of Simois,
E'en Paphos she—for this—
And her own spring of Cyprus' roses spurn'd.
But while it yet befalls 85
That Cupid still is mild, these lucky walls
To leave (false Circe's Halls)
I straight prepare, holpen by medicine
Of Moly, plant divine.
'Tis set: once more to haunt Cam's reedy pools;
Once more to enter those hoarse-murmuring Schools. 90

Meanwhile, this tribute slight from friend confest
Accept—few words in verse altern comprest.

ELEGY II

(Date: 1626. Age: Seventeen or Eighteen.)

THE subject of this lament was Richard Ridding, M.A., of St. John's College, Cambridge, Senior Esquire Bedell of the University; with whose venerable figure Milton had been familiar through two University sessions.

In Milton's time there were three 'Bedells' (Senior, Middle, and Junior). They were elected by the two houses—the Regents and the non-Regents. Their duties were multifarious, and consisted mainly of attending on the Chancellor, or Vice-Chancellor, summoning to sermons, academical disputations, processions, visiting the various schools, and so forth. One of the quaintest was that of 'knocking out' the voice of anybody who attempted to argue at the final, formal questioning of a candidate for the Baccalaureate degree, by knocking loudly on the door. This is reminiscent of an allusion in Milton's *Apology for Smectymnuus*. 'with thoughts lower than any Beadle betakes him to whip the signe-posts of Cambridge Alehouses'.

Milton describes this Bedell, Richard Ridding, as a most conspicuous figure, with his hoary locks and silver-gilt mace; a vision, to his impressionable eye, of snow and silver in the dark-gowned assemblies; so that, in wishing him to be rejuvenated, as also in comparing him to 'wing-foot Hermes', he betrays his characteristic deficiency of humour—a deficiency which indeed seems symbolic as a kind of primeval 'fall' inherent in his state of sublimity. This was allied with his precarious sentiment of humanism. Compare in his apostrophe to the Death-goddess, Persephone.

Why dost not rather chuse
Those who are clods insensible?

in this early Elegy, with the following from *Samson Agonistes*, his final work:

Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That wandring loose about
Grow up and perish, as the summer flie,
Heads without name no more rememberd.

The sentiment—which is re-expressed also in *Ad Patrem*,

Epitaphium Damonis, and *Ad Joannem Roussum*—is derived from classical writers. Milton, not less than Shakespeare, deprecated the mob—that sinisterly puerile aggregate; but in his prose works he shows much respect and consideration for ordinary people.

AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN

On the Death of the Cambridge University 'Bedell'

So thou, our Cynosure (whose mace of sheen
Soft-times hath summon'd Pallas' band), despite
Thy Beadleship, captiv'd¹ by Death hast been—
Death, who himself Earth's last dread Beadle, spares
Not his own office—though more blanch'd the hairs Lat. 5
Crowning thy temples than those swan-plumes white
'Neath which (we hear) Jove's self disguised lay!
Yet didst thou merit that thy youth, renew'd
With brew'd Thessalian juices, o'erliving clean
The twice-liv'd Æson's years, on Earth should stay— 10
Didst merit, too, that while a goddess sued
With prayer importunate
For thee, great Æsculapius should save
Thy life by med'cine's arts from Styx's wave!
Nay, when thy Phoebus bade thee to convene
The Gowned ranks—nor on his errand wait—
Thou stoodst like wingfoot Hermes² in the Hall
Of Troy, dispatch'd from Jove's ethereal
Citadel, or like Eurybates³ wert seen;
When he, before Achilles' wrathful frown, 15
Made the stern hests of Agamemnon known!
Great Queen Sepulchral, Pluto's satellite,⁴
Thou who hast been o'er-cruel to the Muse—
Nay, unto Pallas' self too cruel quite!—
Why dost not rather chuse

¹ Captiv'd, v. El. 1.³ Il. i. 320.² Il. xxiv. 334, &c⁴ Death.

ELEGY II

11

Those who are clods insensible? That crew
 Is the sure mark thy shafts should aye pursue.
 Then, Cambridge, grieve in dusky garb severe
 For this thy Dead! Let many a falling tear
 Bedew his sable bier!
 Let mournful Elegy's plaining measures flow,
 And all thy schools resound the Dirge's woe!

20

ELEGY III

(Date: 1626. Age. Seventeen.)

It seems strange to find Milton formally lamenting the death of a Bishop, as he does here and also in *Silvarum Liber III*. But his anti-prelatic opinions were not yet developed, and he could let his feelings go out generously with the general appreciation of a worthy dignitary; for Dr. Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, the subject of his Elegy, was, as Masson puts it, 'one of the brightest intellects in the English Church'.

Milton was probably acting as a sort of University Poet Laureate; as one of the band of scholars chosen to write obituary and other Latin poems on behalf of the University on special occasions. He wrote in this kind three obituary poems—those in memory of the Vice-Chancellor himself, of an Esquire Bedell, and of two Bishops—sufficient evidence of itself that his outstanding talents were eventually appreciated at Cambridge.

Milton associates the Bishop's decease—at the age of seventy-one—with the great mortality of the plague (1625-6): thirty-five thousand in London and its environs. He also relates it to the death in the same year of notable men abroad—especially Christian, Duke of Brunswick, who fought on the Protestant side in the early part of the Thirty Years War (1618-48), and Count Ernest of Mansfeld, who, though a Catholic, was his ally. At any rate, these are the most satisfactory identifications of the 'fam'd Duke' and 'his great ally'.

The apostrophe to Death is characteristically Miltonic; and conceivably, as Tillyard believes in regard to *Lycidas*, he was influenced—at least, subconsciously—by the fear that he himself should die before the promise of his ambitions was fulfilled. No less characteristic of Milton is the strange, dream-like compound of Heaven and Elysium to which he is transported in the vision.

The pessimistic pagan (or classical) and the optimistic Christian-pagan portions are elaborately opposed to one another, and are almost equal in length.

AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN

On the Death of the Bishop of Winchester

DEJECT and dumb, companionless I sate;
 And while great woes innumerable smote my breast,
 Arose the phantasm of that mortal Pest
 Which in this Land Death's goddess wrought of late,
 When Death himself with funeral torch of dread
 Enter'd our barons' marble-glistening Halls, Lat. 5
 And smote their gold and jasper-laden walls,
 And with bold sickle struck our nobles dead
 On heaps. That Duke I then remembered
 Fam'd, with his great ally, whose bones were burn'd 10
 On pyres untimely; I remember'd, too,
 The heroes that all Belgia from her view
 Saw rapt when she for her lost leaders mourn'd.

Yet thee, most noble prelate—thee in chief,
 Of thine own Winchester the glory late—
 I wail'd, and melting into tears of grief, 15
 I sadly thus deplor'd:
 O cruel Death, whom next in power we rate
 To Tartarus' dread Lord,
 Is't not indeed enow,
 Before thy wrath the very woods must bow ?
 That in thy danger grow
 The grasses of the field ? that at thy breath
 The crocus and the lily, and the rose 20
 (Which dedicate to lovely Venus blows)
 Should wither and decay for thee, O Death ?
 Who sufferest not the oak away,
 The margent of the stream
 That shares, to gaze upon the watery gleam
 Smooth-sliding past ?—To whom all fowls that fly,
 Our wing'd diviners of the liquid sky,

Must one and all succumb;
 With myriad beasts that in the dark woods stray, 25
 And all the herds of Proteus' sea-calves dumb
 Which on the nurture of his caves subsist?
 O envious Goddess, wherefore dost thou list—
 Thou, with such powers endu'd, thy hands to dye
 With human blood? this noble breast to ply
 With those keen shafts unerring, and to chase
 This half-celestial spirit from his place? 30

While, pondering deeply thus, some tears I shed,
 From western Ocean dewy Hesperus rose,
 And Phoebus that from our far eastern shore
 His course had measur'd o'er,
 Had sunk his chariot in the Atlantick wave.
 Then straightway in the hollow of my bed 35
 Reclin'd, I sought repose,
 Till night and sleep begun mine eyes to close:
 Meseemeth that I have
 Stray'd hence afar into a fair wide Field,
 Whereof no skill, alack! doth me bested
 To tell the things reveal'd.
 There the broad champain shines with purple ray,
 As hills flush roseate with the dawn of day; 40
 And as when all her wealth bright Iris shows,
 The ground in many-colour'd livery glows.
 Not Flora with more mingled hues and quaint—
 Flora, with whom light Zephyr loves to play—
 The Gardens of Alcinous did paint!
 Streams, molten silver, lave those vernant leas, 45
 Whose sands flash richer gold
 Than far-fam'd Tagus' banks Hesperian hold;
 Through treasures of odorous opulence glides
 Mild-whispering Favonius, western breeze
 Whose humid breath abides
 Beneath soft leaves of rose innumerable born.

Such was the Palace of the Lord of Morn 50
 • ('Tis fabled) on the extreme Ganges' strand.
 But while I, wonder-strook
 At those deep shadows cast by the clustering vines
 And luminous levels, look,
 Clear, on a sudden, in my ken doth stand
 The mitr'd dead! And lo, what radiance bright
 Star-like from forth his glorious visage shines!
 Sky-robcs that downward flow of dazzling white 55
 To his golden sandals sweep. A snowy band
 Encompasseth that hallow'd head of his.
 While cometh in such habiliment¹ as this
 The Venerable Sire, with joyous sound
 Quakes tremblingly the flower-embroider'd ground:
 The heavenly host claps each his jewell'd wings,
 The loud uplifted Trump of Victory sings 60
 In the clear air, as each his comrade new
 Salutes with song and close imbracements due;
 And One with peaceful lips doth thus proceed:
 Come, Son, partake the joy and happiness
 Of this thy Father's Kingdom, and be freed
 Now and for evermore of toil and stress!

He spake; and angel bands, on wing upborne, 65
 Touch'd their bright harps. But with the night was sped
 My golden peace. Since then those dreams I mourn,
 With Cephalus' false love, Aurora, fled.
 Would that such dreams might oft to me return!

¹ Not a Miltonian (poetic) word, but cp. Spenser:

'Straunge Lady in so straunge habiliment' (*F.Q.* i. vi. 30).

ELEGY IV

(Date: 1627. Age Eighteen)

THOMAS YOUNG was the son of a Perthshire minister who was one of the signatories of the protest that was submitted to Parliament in 1606, against the introduction of Episcopacy into Scotland. After obtaining his M.A. degree at the University of St. Andrews, he came to England, where he earned his living mainly by teaching.

He was Milton's tutor both before and during part of his attendance at St. Paul's School, until about 1622, when he went to Hamburg as Chaplain to the English Merchants there—apparently because as a married man with a family he could not get a sufficiently lucrative post in England. In March 1628, not many months after the Elegy was written and as if in fulfilment of the hopes it bids him entertain, he returned to be inducted into the united vicarages of St. Peter and St. Mary at Stowmarket in Suffolk, which he continued to hold despite his Puritan principles during the ecclesiastical dictatorship of Archbishop Laud. Afterwards he was prominent as one of the divines of the Westminster Assembly; and when, in 1644, Masters and Fellows with Royalist sympathies were turned out of Cambridge by the Parliamentarians, he was given the Mastership of Jesus College, and later received the degree of D.D. He continued to be Vicar of Stowmarket until his death in 1655 at the age of sixty-seven.

He held strong views on the observation of the Sabbath, which, he maintained in his *Dies Dominica*, should be entirely devoted to religious purposes. But besides his association with Milton, he is chiefly remembered as the principal of five Puritan divines who published in 1641 *An Answer To A Book Entitled An Humble Remonstrance* under their combined initials: Smectymnuus. It was directed against Bishop Hall's defence of Episcopacy and the English liturgy, and was the first important challenge of Episcopacy by English Churchmen; but what gives it its special distinction is, that Milton—no doubt, through Young's agency—was drawn into the controversy. With his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnuus* he came to the rescue of his 'respected friends', as he calls them in his subsequent *Apology for Smectymnuus*—that miracle of satirical style.

Mr. Tillyard suggests, in his *Milton*,¹ that Young had a considerable influence in forming the 'less pleasant side of Milton's puritanism'. However this may be, a very unpuritanical quality is evident in these Elegies; and whether or not Young introduced their author to Ovid, whose influence is predominant in their composition, he had certainly assisted Milton's early efforts to ascend the Parnassian slopes:

With him to guide my steps, I first assay'd
The Muses' secret bowers and hallow'd mount
Fork'd, of Parnassus green

Milton warmly esteemed Young, as he testifies in this Elegy; but he seems to have found it rather an effort to write to him. In the first of his *Epistolae Familiares*, which is addressed to Young, he apologizes for not writing sooner. Two years go by, and then comes this Elegy—with another apology for silence.

Ominous news had come from the Continent. The Thirty Years' War had reached a critical stage, and it was rumoured that Hamburg itself was menaced. Milton's anxiety for Young's safety thus finds expression in one of those bursts of sorrow and anger with which elsewhere in these poems he apostrophizes Death. Fiercely he rages. Britain is the cause of this! 'You are harsher than your white cliffs,' he exclaims, envisaging the iron-hearted abstraction, 'for you have driven into exile your most enlightened sons! You deserve to be eternally benighted!'

This tendency to objectify abstractions—which is so great an incitement of other passions besides anger—is characteristic of Milton and also peculiarly significant in regard both to his polemical prose and to his epic poetry. To him Salmasius was a sort of abstraction, like Death, or Britain (whether in the mood of anger or of eulogy), or Satan, the doyen of abstractions. The poetical imagination has its religious symbolism, its fervid nationalism, and its romantic sensuousness (or idealized sensuality), no less illusionary and seductive than are their ordinary representations. But the tendency to personify abstractions is, of course, the dominant attribute of the sublime imagination.

In regard to Milton's relations with Young, he wrote to him, less than four months after Young was installed at Stowmarket, the second of the *Epistolae Familiares* (Cambridge, 21 July 1628), accepting an invitation to visit him there; while, according to

¹ Chatto and Windus, 1930.

tradition at Stowmarket, Milton was a frequent visitor there during Young's incumbency.

But Milton's divorce writings, his anti-Sabbatarian views (divulged in his *De Doctrina Christiana*), and his rupture with the Presbyterians, of whom Young was a zealous member, must have interfered with their intimacy if not with their mutual regard.

AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN

To Thomas Young

(His tutor now performing the duties of 'Pastor' to the English Merchants of Hamburg)

SPEED, letter, speed the measureless Ocean o'er
 And seek the Land Almain
 Forthwith, across the calm sea's level floor:
 Break off these dallyings of sloth and may
 Nought check thy going, or thy haste delay.
 I, on my part, will Æolus invoke
 (Who doth in Lipara's Cave the winds refrain), Lat. 5
 With ocean's greenhair'd gods, and Nereus' Queen
 (Doris, of azurn sheen)
 Ring'd by her quiring nymphs, through their domain
 To waft thee on thy way with zephyrs light.
 But if thou canst, procure such fleet-wing'd yoke
 As drew Medea once from Jason's sight,¹ 10
 Or young Triptolemus from Eleusis bore—
 Joy's harbinger—to bless the Scythian shore.
 Then when Almannia's tawny sands appear,
 To wealthy Hamburg's walls thy footsteps steer—
 Hamburg, the City that (as Fame doth go)
 From murder'd Hama hath her title ta'en:² 15
 Him did the Dansker mace in death lay low.
 A prelate dwells there prais'd, who doth exceed
 In antique piety, Christ's flock to feed.
 He of my life grown more than second part,
 Maketh me live with this dividual heart. 20

¹ Eur. *Med.* l. 314, &c.

² So Warton.

Ah, look what seas, what mountains intervene
My other dearer self and me between!
Dearer to me than thou, O Socrates
(Most learn'd of Greeks), to Alcibiades
(The son of Clinias he, fam'd Ajax' seed)—
Than great Stagirite sage¹ to Philip's heir 25
(The lofty-soul'd of whom 'twas nois'd indeed
Him unto Lybian Jove Olympias bare)—
Than Phoenix, or than Cheiron, half-divine,
To stern Achilles' heart—is he to mine.
With him to guide my steps, I first assay'd
The Muses' secret bowers and hallow'd mount
Fork'd, of Parnassus green; Pieria's fount 30
Drain'd deep, and thrice my joyful brow allay'd,
While Clio smil'd, with Castaly's pure wine.

But Æthon, flaming in the midnight sky,
Has thrice on Aries gaz'd, and thrice anew
His fleecy back bedyed with golden hue;
Twice this worn earth hast thou with verdure strown,
O Flora; twice have winds of autumn blown
Away thy wealth: yet might I never feast
Mine eyes upon his countenance, or mine ear
Drink his familiar voice's accents dear!
Go, vie in speed with the loud-roaring East;
Then shall appear the strong necessity
That I in my admonishments allege.
Him shalt thou find by his sweet spouse to sit
(With children nurs'd on knee, love's dearest pledge),
Musing some early Father's volume vast,
Or Book of Holy Writ,
On tender minds celestial dew to shed :
Redemption's holiest task, of none surpass'd.
Next, give him greetings warm (as love once led),
Saying what would grace thy master, were he by.

† Aristoteles.

Then, with thine eyelids something downward cast
 And lips compos'd to shamefast gravity, 50
 See thou remember to present this plea:
 Accept these words (if among warring foes
 The gentle Muse perchance may interpose)
 Which faithful hand from England's shore hath sent:
 Though late, accept their greeting's warm intent—
 If late, the warmer welcome may they have,
 As was the kiss laggard Ulysses gave 55
 O'erdue, but true, to chaste Penelope.

But how shall I of this just charge be quit,
 Since nought could me absolve of count so true?
 Judg'd justly of delay, my blame I admit;
 Asham'd, agree my duty all to do.
 Yet do thou pardon him who doth avow 60
 His guilt which, 'own'd to', 'half-aton'd' may grow:
 Mild to their victim scar'd, wild beasts may pause,
 Nor ope to rend his limbs their yawning jaws;
 Nor lions tear him prone with cruel claws;
 Oft the fierce Thracian banditry that bare 65
 The Northern lance, would melt at suppliants' prayer:
 So hands uplift may turn the thunderstone;
 So too, may haply one
 Slight victim when the gods are wroth, atone.

Long purpos'd I to write, but now my will
 (Love suffering not) would lengthier dallying blame; 70
 For in mine ear, forsooth, uncertain Fame
 Hath nois'd, alack!—herald too sure of ill—
 That war doth in thy neighbour countries flame;
 That whilst a barbarous soldiery surround
 Thee and thy city, Saxon chiefs have found
 Arms; that Bellona devastates the plain,
 And gore bedews the corpse-sown fields like rain: 75

Since Thracia now to Germany concedes
 The native God of Battles that she breeds,
 And thitherward Mars drives his Thracian steeds.
 The olive, that did evermore upshoot,
 Now loseth flower and fruit;
 And Peace, that loathes the brazen trump of War, 80
 Is fled from earth afar—
 Is fled—ah, then, that 'Justest Maid'¹ who pass'd
 Heav'nward, was not (as men misdeem'd) 'the last!'
 But while war's billows round about thee swell
 With horror teem'd, thou dost all friendless dwell
 Poor, among strangers, seeking means to live—
 Means that thy native country ne'er did give. 85

O Mother Land, inhospitable Home,
 More stern than are the white cliffs of thine Isle
 Unto the seas that on them break in foam,
 Beseems it thee relentless to exile
 (O Iron-Heart!) thy sons devoid of guile 90
 To seek in outland coasts the bread they lack:
 Sons that foreknowing Jove to thee had sent
 To bring from heav'n glad tidings of content,
 And teach how leads, through death, the starward track?
 Wert not in Stygian darkness rightly pent 95
 To die of thy pin'd soul's eternal dearth?
 E'en thus the Thisbite Seer² the wilds of earth
 And rugged wastes Arabian must tread
 With unaccustom'd foot, what time the hand
 He fled of Ahab and his ruthless Queen:
 Cilician Paul,³ too, from Philippi bann'd, 100
 Tortur'd and torn by shrieking scourges, bled
 And suffer'd thus whenas he forth was led;
 Suffer'd thus He who was of Life the Lord,
 What time to leave their coasts it was implor'd
 By those ingrateful fishers Gadarene.

¹ Astraea. *Ov. Met.* l. 149.² 1 Kings xix.³ Acts xvi, xxi.

Then have thou still good cheer, though cares
 bcset; 105
 Nor let thy shuddering frame grow pale with fright.
 What though thou be with glittering swords begirt,
 And though a thousand darts destruction threat,
 Yet none shall e'er thy side unharnest hurt, 110
 Nor with thy spouting blood one blade be wet.
 Jehovah's self, with fulgent buckler bright,
 Shall 'neath his wings defend, and for thee fight:
 E'en He who smote the Assyrian host at deep
 Midnight beneath the walls of Zion's Keep,¹
 Routed the army that Damascus hoar 115
 From age-old fields did on Samaria pour;²
 Who the mass'd cohorts, with their fearful king,
 O'erwhelm'd with terrour! Hark how the clarions sing
 In the keen air! Through rolling dust amain
 Drum the reverberant hooves that trample the plain;
 The desert sands their jumping chariots jar;³ 120
 Their prancing horses neigh to meet the war
 'Mid clatter'd steel and deep-breath'd groans of pain!

Hope, then—for with the unluckiest Hope may
 dwell—
 Forget not Hope: with generous courage quell
 These ills; nor deem it for incredible 125
 That happier years are yet upstor'd for thee,
 And thou once more thy native hearth shalt see.

¹ 2 Kings xix.² 2 Kings vii.³ Nahum iii.

ELEGY V

(Date April 1629. Age Twenty.)

THIS Elegy, which was written soon after Milton had taken his B.A. degree at Cambridge in January 1628-9, is the most spontaneous and the most naturalistic in feeling of all those that he wrote in Ovidian mood.

It is so spontaneous as to be almost automatic, so naturalistic as to be virtually elemental. It expresses no less passively than actively his reactions to the excitements of spring, and through abandonment achieves universal quality—as if his very soul had become a pure conductor for the animistic current. This Elegy embodies sexual and naturalistic sentiment in a fusion which was a heritage from primitive times; and in its peculiar orgiastic way, it is a more effective purgation than Milton, whose poems are all more or less purgations of the soul, could ever afterwards obtain, even in the mighty efforts of his power. But in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* he was subconsciously attempting to cleanse his bosom of more perilous stuff than the lees and ferment of spring-burgeoning sex; although he had that also to contend with in the repression of his unpuritanical feelings and the fomenting of his subconscious energies in the crater of his genius.

This poem, taken in conjunction with its successor, marks the close of a period in Milton's life.

AT THE AGE OF TWENTY

On the Approach of Spring

Look, how volubil¹ Time's incessant round
Fresh zephyrs yet with glowing Spring renews:
Look how, her transient youth resum'd, the ground
From frost unfetter'd, wears her tenderest green!
Err I, or doth new strength inform my Muse,
And are her powers refresh'd the gift of Spring?
'Tis by Spring's gift that she restor'd hath been.

Lat. 5

Admire who will, some novel task she'd seek;
 Since ever in my sight continuing,
 Flit Castaly and Fork'd Parnassus' peak,
 Whence nightly dreams to me Peirene bring. 10
 Hot grows my heart, stirr'd by a force unseen,
 And hallow'd sounds transport my raptur'd mind.
 Apollo comes—Behold those locks entwin'd
 With Daphnian bays—'tis Phoebus' self I see!
 Forthwith my soul, slipt from the body free
 And rapt to loftier heights of liquid sky, 15
 Hovereth where the gadding clouds go by;
 Anon, through caves of gloomy shade she hies
 ('The Poet's own secluded sanctuaries),
 Till opens unto me each secret shrine
 Of the high gods, whereby I may divine
 Whate'er may hap in heav'n's wide boundaries;
 Nor do blind Tartarus' gulfs escape mine eyes. 20

From parted lips what loftier accents flow?
 What birth portends this rapturous holy fire?
 What but that Spring which did my mind inspire,
 To her own bounty shall her praises owe?

O Nightingale, who from thy close-rooft house
 Of leaves fresh-budded, warblest trill on trill, 25
 When all the woods are still,
 Let us begin—thou perch'd 'mid forest boughs;
 I in the city cloister'd—both to sing
 As one the charms of new-arrived Spring.
 Hail! 'tis again Spring's turn! Her praise awake;
 And may the Muse this task perennial make! 30
 The sun, with golden reins turn'd northwards, flees
 The Ethiopians¹ and Tithonus' leas:
 Brief grows Night's path—brief pause of Darkness deep

¹ At the vernal equinox.

When 'mid abhorrent shades she dwells immur'd;
 Our northern Wagoner which erst endur'd 35
 The swink of lengthier course, the Wain pursues
 Tireless; few grow the watchful fires that use
 Their vigil round the courts of Jove to keep,
 Since with retreat of Night
 Murder and Guile and Rapine take their flight;
 Nor do the gods now fear the Giants' spite. 40

On lofty crag, perchance, some shepherd swain
 Reclin'd, while dewy Earth with daybreak glows
 To Phoebus hath these words at random said:
 Phoebus, this night most surely didst thou lack
 That maid of thine whose wont was to restrain
 Thy swift careering steeds.
 How eagerly, with quiver at her back, 45
 Cynthia her well-beloved woods to gain
 Upon her journey speeds
 Till she beholds, on high, Day's glistening wheels,
 And as her fainter beams she quencheth, feels
 Right glad (methinks) her part was done so soon
 By her twin-brother's boon!
 Wilt thou not leave, Aurora (Phoebus cried),
 Thine aged bridegroom's bed?
 On yon cold couch what boots it to recline? 50
 Thy hunter, Cephalus, on the sward doth bide
 Thy coming. Rouse thee, then! The soaring peak
 Of Mount Hymettus holds that flame of thine.
 The gold-hair'd goddess feels her bashful cheek
 Too well with conscious flush her fault disclose,
 And faster yet her matin chariot drives.
 Soon, doff'd foul age's weeds, the Earth revives,
 And yearneth, Phoebus, for thy lov'd embrace 55
 Deserv'd; for what could paragon her grace
 When in voluptuous beauty to the air
 Her all-prolific bosom she doth bare,

And spiced Sabean harvestings exhale
 (Breathing mild balms whose scent impregns the gale)
 Her lovely lips betwixt, 60
 With rare perfume of Paphian roses mixt?

Lo, as the towering pines round Ops¹ do grow
 On Ida's mount, yon sacred grove imbowers
 Like to a coronet her lofty brow;
 Anon, she plaits her dewy hair with flowers
 Of every hue that may her lover move:
 As Proserpin pleas'd Pluto when she ware
 That loose train of her flower-inwoven hair. 65
 Hark, Phoebus, since thy bride doth willing prove,
 How every vernal air
 Makes honey'd supplication for thy love!
 Look how the West clappeth his musky wing,
 Fragrant of cinnamon, and clapping sighs,
 While every bird that flies 70
 To thee, methinks, doth salutation bring!

No rash bride portionless is Earth that might
 Crave to be courted, nor for any need
 Of destitute requires thy spousals' meed:
 Kindly she offers virtuous herbs to suit
 Thy healing skill's repute.
 If then this prize—her glittering gifts—thee move 75
 (For gifts may purchase love),
 Know that for thee she keeps the wealth she hides
 Beneath huge ocean's tides,
 Or roots of mountains, height up-heav'd on height.
 Alack! when wearied of Olympus' crest
 Up-toil'd, thou div'st into the western deep, 80
 How oft with thee she pleads: O Phoebus, why
 O'er-worn with thine oft journeyings through the sky,

¹ The wife of Saturn.

Doth blue-hair'd Tethys thee to the bosom take
 Of her Hesperian waters? What dost make
 With that Sea-goddess, or the Atlantick wave?
 Why in foul brine thy god-like features lave?
 Far better wert allay them in my shade. 85
 Hither, then, come; those flaming tresses steep
 In drench of dew: in my cool grasses laid,
 Slumber shall gentlier on thine eyelids rest.
 Come, then, and lay thy splendours¹ on my breast;
 And where thou liest may whispering zephyrs creep
 Caressingly about our limbs in sleep
 Reclin'd, their dewes the humid roses weep!
 Since wiselier now thy fire thou governest, 90
 How can the flaming fate of Semele,
 Or Phaethon's hot-smoking axle-tree,
 Hold any terrors still in store for me?
 Then come, and lay thy splendours on my breast.

While wanton Earth by sighs her mind doth show, 95
 Her general brood² pursue their Parent's ways;
 For vagabond Cupid now wide-ranging strays
 Around the globe, and from the sun's bright blaze
 Kindled afresh his torches' bickering rays.
 Newstrung, his deadly bow sings loud and shrill;
 Flash his bright shafts new-barb'd, forecasting woe: 100
 So seeketh he that Maid unconquer'd still,
 Diana's self to tame,
 And Vesta goddess pure, in wonted seat
 Of vigil by her holy altar flame.
 Venus with Spring repairs her beauty's wane,
 And seems fresh-risen from the warm sea-foam,
 While youthful bands through marble cities roam 105
 Uplifting loud the Hymenaeon strain,
 Till both the shore and hollow cliffs repeat
Hail Hymen! in refrain.

¹ 'thy evening glories'—Cowper.

² 'And all her countless offspring feel the same'—Cowper.

See the god go in grace the more complete
 Of festal garb, beseeeming to the eye
 And redolent of the purple saffron's dye,
 While many a maid, with golden-cinctur'd breast, 110
 Comes forth to taste delights of glorious May!
 Each prayeth and every prayer holds one request:
 To win from Venus him she loves the best;
 His seven-reed pipe the shepherd tunes amain,
 And Phyllis finds a song to suit his lay.

Now chaunts the mariner his nightly song 115
 That charms the stars; which when the dolphins hear,
 Upleaping through the shoaling surf they peer.
 On high Olympus Jove makes mirth, withal,
 Himself to sport with Juno; at his call
 Their household gods glad to the banquet throng.
 While lated twilight grows, the Satyrs tread
 By troupes in skimming dance the flowery mead. 120
 Sylvanus, too, is near
 (And hath his brows with his own cypress twin'd):
 Upward a god, and downward goat, combin'd.
 The Dryads that 'neath aged trees lay hid,
 Range wide the lonely fields and hills amid;
 On slopes of Maenalus
 Arcadian Pan himself grown riotous, 125
 Alike through meadow doth, and thicket, flee—
 Scarce Mother Cybele
 From his pursuit, or Ceres, safe may be!

Lo, in Love's nets burneth yon wanton Faun
 To snare an Oread: she to shroud doth fly,
 Saving her fears; yet hidden, half withdrawn
 From view, half visible, courts discovery: 130
 Flies—yet in flying doth her flight belie!

Now before Heav'n's own self the Gods approve
 Their woods, where kindly Powers¹ haunt every grove

¹ 'Some kind Power'—Cowper; cp. *Arcades*, 44.

(So haunt they long!). Then from the woods you love,
Do not again, ye gods, I pray you, rove!
Thus may new Golden Ages call thee, Jove, 135
To earth once more; where men that wish thee, mourn:
Why shouldest thou return
Thy thunders' fell artillery to use?
At least, do not, O Phoebus, thou refuse
This rush of bridals to prolong, but slow
The course of Spring that she may tardier go:
Less soon rude winter's long-drawn nights appal, 140
And later 'thwart our Pole the shadows fall.

ELEGY VI

(Date: December 1629 Age. Twenty-one.)

THIS Elegy begins in a light, bantering mood. Diodati has excused himself for any falling-off in quality that may appear in some verses he has sent to Milton, on the grounds that he is engaged in Christmas festivities; and Milton, who has been living with his usual moderation, affects to understand that Diodati has been eating and drinking too much. He wishes him good health, the more especially as he may need it in such trying conditions.

Then, after cordial expressions of affection, he proceeds to praise wine and sumptuous living as favourable to poetic composition. Suddenly his argument changes. Wine is certainly favourable to the lighter forms of verse, says he, but the poet who would sing of wars, and the fruition of heaven's fuller plans; of heroes and prophets and superhuman leaders of men; of heaven and of hell: who would tame savage beasts and charm Odyssean souls o'er perilous seas, through Circe's magic halls, past the Siren shallows, and through the realms of death itself, must eschew wine and luxurious living. 'This kind' (for it is the poetic complement of the great pronouncement) 'can come forth by nothing, save by prayer and fasting.'

Immediately after these lines (55-78)—described by Masson as 'about Milton's noblest in Latin'—he refers to a poem that he is writing. This was his great ode, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*; and in its conjunction with the dynamic passage which I have paraphrased, a crisis is indicated in Milton's development.

To Charles Diodati

Who had, during his residence in the country, written to the author, begging him to excuse his verses if they were less good than usual, because, amid the festivities with which his friends had welcomed him, he was unable to give enough favourable attention to the Muses. This was the reply that he received:

FROM me, fed sparely, 'health' to thee (since thou
 Full-cramm'd to surfeit, mayst to want it, prove,
 What needs thy Muse, then, mine to challenge now,
 Holding me from the woods of my desire?
 My heart's affection from this song wouldst know? Lat. 5
 Trust me! 'twill ne'er tell all, my Doric lay;
 For no cramp't measures can confine my love—
 Love that, of gait entire,
 Will ne'er to halting feet himself convey.
 See now how well thou dost for me portray
 Those festal scenes to gay December dear: 10
 Rites done to God, Heav'n-fugitive; joys that all
 The wintry landskip cheer—
 Mirth-loving firesides, boon with grapes of Gaul!
 Why blame the Muse 'from wine and banquet fled'?
 Bacchus to song, song is to Bacchus wed;
 Nor ever yet did Phoebus hold it scorn 15
 With ivy's emerald bunches to adorn
 His brows, nor ivy-crown
 To change with Bacchus for his bays' renown.

How oft when on Aonian mountains went
 The Muses Nine, mingled in mystic rout
 Of wild Thyone's¹ sort, they rais'd their shout
Evoe! whereas even my Ovid sent
 From Danube's plain² but wretched lays and lean,
 Since there no merriment
 Of feast was heard, nor vine had planted been. 20

What did the Muse—his Muse³ whom Teos bore—
 In her brief lyric line
 Sing but of rose and wine
 And those close-clustering locks that Bacchus wore?
 Nay, who but Bacchus of the Theban steep
 Could with such tones inspire
 The chords of Pindar's lyre,

¹ Mother of Bacchus.² Tomis.³ Anacreon.

Whose every page breathes of the cup drain'd deep?
 When overturn'd with harsh-jarr'd grating groan, 25
 The ponderous chariot lies,
 And thence head-foremost flies
 The driver,¹ swart with dust Olympian, thrown!

Drench'd in the four-years-mellow'd vintaging,
 Rome's lyric Bard of Chloe's sunbright hair,
 Or that sweet song of Glycera, could sing.
 So, too, all noble spread of sumptuous fare
 That decks thy board, impowereth the brain, 30
 Cherisheth the wit: thy cup's true Massick glow
 Foams mantling with the Muse's richest vein;
 Thus, as from cask² thy builded numbers flow.
 Added the arts and Phoebus—pour'd like wine
 Into thy bosom's core, where thus combine
 Apollo, Ceres, Bacchus: Lyre, Corn, Vine;
 Whose natures thus conjoin'd, 'twere no great odds
 Should thy sweet strains proceed from three such gods. 35

Next Orpheus' harp shall hold thy sense in thrall
 (Of gold y-wrought, soft-touch'd by tuneful hand),
 Or where the tap'stry'd hangings round thee fall,
 Virginals, at whose trembling strings' command
 Trip the fair dancers' feet. 40
 Long be thy Muse detain'd by pageants meet
 As these, and may they back to memory bring
 All, sullen surfeit errs in banishing!
 Then, while the feastful throng
 Consenting with the quill-beats' harmonies,
 Floodeth with dance and song
 Those perfum'd halls, while leap the ivory keys—

¹ Cowper evidently took *equus* for *equus*—his translation being: 'And brown with dust, the fiery courser flies'

² In modern phrase. As 'from the wood'.

Like unsuspected flame
 Thrilling through all thy frame 45
 ('Trust me!), the Muse¹ through every sense thou'lt find
 Creep, while from maidens' eyes and fingertips
 Melodious, the Lyric goddess slips
 Through every porch and inlet of thy mind.

For know, that winged Elegy doth concern
 Full many a god, and to her measures still
 Calls any wight she will. 50
 To her come Bacchus, Erato, Ceres,
 And Venus, and young Cupid, too, his turn
 (The blushing Mother's little son) with these;
 For bards who sing such scenes rich feasts we keep,
 And season'd wines wherein to drench them deep.

But who chaunts wars, and climes that own control 55
 Of full-grown Jove, or chiefs above the span
 Of human, or devout Heroic soul,
 Or the Eternal gods' celestial Plan,
 Or Hell's deep worlds aw'd by that baying Hound—
 Austere as Samos' sage² his life should be:
 His harmless banquet herbs, and on the ground 60
 Hard by, upfill'd from the wave translucent, stand
 His dish of beechen tree;
 The clear crystalline Spring
 Alone his cup's abstemious plenishing.
 To these add youth unstain'd and pure of sin,
 Steel'd and unspotted both of heart and hand:
 So didst thou rise, O holy Augur, dight 65
 In robes of glistening white,
 With lustral waters' sluice, to enter in
 Before the throne of anger'd Deity!
 After this sort Tiresias liv'd (they write)—
 Tiresias, wiser for his banish'd sight;

¹ Lit. Phoebus.² Pythagoras.

Thus Linos, Theban bard, in time gone by;
 Thus, too, soothsayer Calchas fled unhom'd
 From his doom'd hearth; thus aged Orpheus roam'd 70
 When he in desert caves each savage beast
 Tam'd; and he, too, that liv'd on nature's least—
 Brook-drinking Homer, who o'er ocean's strait¹
 Ulysses led, and through false Circe's gate²
 Of witcheries dire, and where the shoals did ring
 With Siren voices luring—yea, O King 75
 Infernal, through thy courts!—to check the brood
 Of ghosts, detain'd by the black-flowing blood!³
 True is, to heav'n the Bard is dedicate,
 And is the gods' high-priest,
 To breathe the hidden Jove from lips and breast.

Still wouldst thou ask mine occupation now
 (If soothly yet thou deem'st so slight a thing—
 What task is mine—importeth thee to know), 80
 The Peaceful Prince of heavenly Seed I sing,⁴
 And that propitious age which was foretold
 In Holy Books of old:
 E'en of the little Lord's first infant cries
 What time He in the lowly stable lies
 (Who with His Father now on high doth reign);
 Of sky-born Star and squadron'd angels' strain, 85
 And many an Idol sudden at his own fane
 Crusht flat. Upon the Day when Christ was born,
 Such was my gift, brought by first gleams of morn.

Tun'd to my native reed, packt safely here
 These verses wait for thee: when in thine ear
 Repeated, thou shalt be my judge to hear.

¹ Of Messina.² *Od.* x. 274, &c.³ *Od.* xi. 34, &c.⁴ *M.'s Nativity Ode.*

ELEGY VII

(Date: May 1627, or May 1628. Age: Eighteen or Nineteen)

THIS is an ingenuous love poem; and the defiant encounter with Cupid, so feelingly described, is as true in the ideal sense as the rest of the narrative is veracious in fact.

The sort of pride depicted in the allegory is not infrequently followed by the kind of fall that ensued when Milton caught sight of the radiant crowd like goddesses,¹ and

fled not sternly from that pleasant sight
Averse, but walk'd where bent of youth might lead,
Letting my eyes meet theirs with little heed—
Nor from their gaze might I withdraw mine own!

It was an experience which he might well have had in mind when, in the eleventh Book of *Paradise Lost*, he told of the just and pious men who very foolishly let their eyes 'rove without rein' about a 'Bevie of fair Women' who also seemed like 'goddesses'.

Milton was fascinated—and so, probably, were the 'goddesses' also; for he was exceptionally attractive in appearance as a young man, both in form and feature. His countenance, which might be described in the phrase from *Paradise Lost* as 'proudly eminent', was instinct with his charming personality and irradiated by his clear grey eyes. It is fascinating to imagine Milton as he appeared at this period, with the intermedium of the exquisite Nuneham portrait. The delicate freshness of his complexion was peculiarly remarkable; his hair was light brown, and clustered in 'curles on either cheek' like those of the 'Cherube' in *Paradise Lost*, the disguised representation of the Lost Archangel

Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smil'd Celestial

And, together with the subtle crasis of youth and advancing manhood, there was the blending of the dominantly masculine quality of Milton's nature with that 'something feminine' which, as S. T. Coleridge has observed, is 'discernible in the countenances of all men of genius'.²

Even if the first Elegy and the present one had never been

¹ The Rev. Walter Begley suggests that they were the May Queen and her satellites. *Nova Solyma* (John Murray, 1902) ² *Table Talk*, 17 March 1832

written, it would have been evident from his poems and prose writings that Milton was extremely susceptible to female charm. The love passages in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* would alone establish this, and they show that, in his resistance to the tendency, he was driven down into profound depths of thought on the sexual aspect of love; while his Divorce pamphlets reveal the same compulsion from a different angle.

An adolescent poetical mind of such intensely sensuous vision as Milton's was certain to be beguiled by the mirage of infatuation; and he might have been expected to have shown more consideration for the englamoured young elegist who had been his own self, than to call his ingenuous poetic effusions 'vain trophies', as he did, eighteen years afterwards, when he looked back upon them from the vantage-ground of his Platonic academy.

Seventh Elegy, in my Nineteenth Year

O GENTLE goddess of the Cyprian Shrine,¹
 Or ever I had learnt love's laws of thee—
 While yet my breast from Paphian fires was free—
 I mock'd at Cupid's arrows as at toys
 Befitting none but boys,
 And scorn'd, O mightiest Love, thy power divine!
 Go, child (I cried), go shoot thy turtles tame! Lat. 5
 A babe commander gentlest wars should need.
 Go, boy, thy high triumphs² o'er sparrows lead:
 Worthy such martial trophies are to suit
 Thy warlike ardour's bruit;
 But at mankind why those weak weapons aim?
 Thy quiver the strength of man could ne'er exceed. 10

This Cupid could not brook
 (Readier than he no god to anger took);
 With doubled heat his cruel heart 'gan flame.

'Twas Spring, and o'er the farmhouse roofs the light 15
 Streaming had usher'd in the first of May;

¹ Aphrodite, of Paphos.

² Triumphs, *P.L.* i. 123, &c.

But still mine eyes sought the retreating Night,
 . Unable to endure the blaze of Day.
 Suddenly, with painted wings, my couch anigh
 Stood tireless Love: whose softly threat'ning eye,
 His quiver a-swing, his mien (with all that may
 Adorn the boy, and Love) the god betray! 20
 Such in the everlasting courts divine
 Young Trojan Ganymede mix'd brimming wine
 I' the cup of amorous Jove; so Hylas, son
 Of the Dryop King, rapt by a Naiad, won
 The beauteous nymphs his kisses to receive.
 But Cupid added wrath (you would believe 25
 It well became him): added, too, withal,
 Harsh threatenings mixt with gall.
 Wretch! (quoth he) 'twould have cost thee far less pain
 From others' fate to learn;
 But now shalt thou in turn
 Bear witness to the weight of my right hand,
 And be among the band
 Enroll'd who of its powers expert,¹ complain:
 Thus to thy cost shall I much credit gain. 30
 'Twas I myself (e'en if thou dost not know)
 Who laid proud Phoebus low:
 Proud from his Python conquest, yet to me
 He yielded victory!
 Oft as he thinks on Daphne, he'll confess
 My darts more sure, and of more deadliness, 35
 Than his. The Parthian vanquishes by flight,
 Drawing his bow, yet ne'er can pass my sleight.
 To me the Cretan hunter yields, and he
 Who ambush'd Procris² slew unweetingly;
 Giant Orion was by me o'erthrown;
 Hercules' arm I quell'd; o'ercame the Friend³ 40
 Of Hercules. Though Jove his thunderstone
 Against me turn, yet every shaft I send

¹ *Expért*, *S. A.* 1044.² 'Latent Procris'—Cowper.³ *Hylas?*

Shall pierce Jove's side to the bone.
 If further doubts remain, my schooling dart
 Shall teach thee rather (tho' to hit thy heart
 In no light mood I try); 45
 For neither may thy Muses thee defend
 Unwise, nor Phoebus' serpent balm may bring!
 He spake, his gold-barb'd arrow brandishing,
 And to the warm bosom of Venus flew.
 But as those thunderous words at me he threw,
 I all but laugh'd, nor fear o' the youngster knew. 50

But now those quarters of the town delight
 Where Londoners expatiate, and now
 The neighbouring country hamlets me invite.
 A crowd, a radiant crowd, that seem'd to show
 Like goddesses, were passing to and fro;
 Who made the Day with double splendour glow. 55
 Was I deceiv'd, or did their borrow'd light
 Make Phoebus' self more bright?
 I fled not sternly from that pleasant sight
 Averse, but walk'd where bent of youth might lead,
 Letting my eyes meet theirs with little heed— 60
 Nor from their gaze might I withdraw mine own!
 One that outshined them all, I there beheld
 (That first of days did I
 Count the beginning of my malady):
 Venus return'd to earth, such charms had shown;
 Or Juno, that as Queen of Heaven excell'd
 In loveliness unparallel'd.
 This maid sly Cupid, mindful of his wrath, 65
 Cast in my very path;
 Such snare for me by him alone was plann'd.
 Then lurk'd he to waylay me near the track,
 Full-quiver'd. At his back
 There swung the burden of his mighty brand.
 Next clung the rogue suddenly to each lid

Of the maiden's eyes; then to her mouth: now slid
 • Her very lips between; now shelt'ring hid 70
 In a dimpled cheek: and thence where'er he stray'd
 Wandering at large, the limber bowman made
 A thousand wounds in my unguarded breast.
 At once strange passions new my heart invade;
 Consum'd with inward fires (that love confest),
 I turn'd to total flame!
 But while I still more sorrowful became,
 She who alone could peace of mind restore, 75
 Was rapt from vision—to be seen no more!

Stunn'd—doubtful half, half wishful of return—
 My whole self rent in twain,
 The body doth remain;
 The soul to follow her desire doth yearn:
 Joys rapt so rathe 'tis balm indeed to weep; 80
 So Mars, cast headlong from the heavenly steep
 'Mid Lemnos' hearths, Olympus' loss did mourn;
 So, too, upon the disappearing sun
 Amphiaraus¹ look'd his last, when borne
 To Hades by his frightened steeds. Undone
 And whelm'd in woe, which course shall I pursue?
 How shall I now renounce the love begun— 85
 Or overtake it? Ah, could I have caught
 One glimpse again of her dear countenance—
 Yea, spoken words to her (sad words, if few)—
 Except she were of stubborn adamant wrought,
 She would not to my prayers be deaf, perchance! 90
 Sure none e'er wasted with unluckier fire,
 Whose first (and sole) example be I known!
 Then spare me, O winged god of soft desire,
 Nor let thy deeds be shown
 Conflicting with thine office! Now, O son
 Of Venus, now with Panick fear I see

¹ Pindar, *Ol.* vi; *Nem.* ix.

Thy bow! O thou who dost in potency 95
 Of bolts and burning brand alike agree,
 Henceforth mine offerings shall smoke upon
 Thine altars! Thou alone I vow for me
 Ever supreme of all the gods shalt be!
 Now lastly from this passion set me free—
 Nay, free me not, since (wherefore no man knows) 100
 Some sweetness tempereth sad in lover's woes!
 Then, wilt thou not vouchsafe to grant me this
 My single orison:
 If any Fair hereafter bring me bliss,
 One dart shall pierce both hearts and make us one? •

EPILOGUE

Vain trophies these of idleness that I
 With care low-thoughted and perverse of mind,
 Erected. 'Twas mine own delusion blind
 That drove my steps awry,
 And youth, ungovern'd, evil schooling gave;
 Till from her shady bowers the Academy¹
 Proffer'd cool streams of the Socratick wave,
 And taught me to unlearn the yoke I tried.
 At once, for aye, the flames of passion died.
 Arm'd as with solid ice, my breast congeals.
 Fear lest his shafts should freeze, young Cupid feels;
 And lovely Venus dreads to find indeed
 In me the vehemence of Diomede!² 10

¹ Of Plato. See Intr., p. 36, *ante*.

² *Il.* v. 335, &c.

A BOOK OF SILVAE

BOOK OF SILVAE, I

(Date October 1626 Age. Seventeen.)

DR. JOHN GOSTLIN, the subject of this poem, was Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, from 1618, and Vice-Chancellor of the University for the second time in 1625-6. He died on 21 October 1626, at the commencement of the Michaelmas term of Milton's third academic year. Gostlin was born at Norwich, educated at Caius College, admitted M.D. in 1602, and afterwards Regius Professor of Physics in the University.

The poem is in Horatian Alcaics, and is so effectively written in that style and measure as to have persuaded Miltonian critics that Horace was a better model for Milton than Ovid. Milton skilfully introduces the classical legend that Aesculapius (the 'blameless physician' of Homer) was put to death by Zeus when he restored Glaucus to life, for fear that he might teach men to avoid death altogether.

The close is characteristic in its redeeming cheer.

AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN

On the Death of the Vice-Chancellor, a Physician

MORTALS, learn submiss to be
To law-giving Destiny;
And to Fate for mercy now
Pay with uplift hands your vow:
You who are renown'd to be
Iapetus'¹ posterity,
In this pendent World who dwell.
Once uncheerful Death from Hell
Stray'd shall cite thee, with what wile,
What demur, wilt him beguile?
Go thou must to Stygian gloom.
If to combat mortal doom

Lat. 5

¹ Here = Japhet.

Man's right arm control'd the force, 10
 Had the fell Alcides' corse
 Ever lain o'er-master'd quite
 On Emathian Ceta's height,
 Poison'd by the Centaur's blood?
 Had traytress Pallas' envious mood
 Ever brought all Troy to view
 Dead Hector? Had Sarpedon, too,
 Whom 'Achilles' shadow' slew, 15
 Ever fall'n by Locrian brand,
 While Jove's self did weeping stand?¹
 If magic spells held Death at bay,
 Would not Circe, too, this day,
 Maugre all her infamy,
 In the world of living be?
 And Medea in her hand
 Brandish yet her potent wand? 20
 Dwelt in herbs that men ignore,
 Or in Medicine's arts a store
 Of divine efficacy
 To foil the Fatal Sisters Three,
 Herb-renown'd Machaon² ne'er
 Had been stricken by the spear
 Of Eurypylus, nor should
 Cheiron else have been subdu'd 25
 By the shaft anointed o'er
 With the Hydra's venom'd gore—
 Aesculapius, nor to thee³
 Had the dread artillery
 Of thy grandsire spoken doom,
 Son, who wast from mother's womb
 Untimely ripp'd! And thou whose name
 Dims thy master Phoebus' fame, 30
 Thou (to whom was given to rule

¹ *Il.* xvi. 459, &c.² *Il.* xi. 614.³ *Pind. Pyth.* iii; *Nem.* iii, &c.

Over all this Gowned School),
 Thou whom our new Delphi¹ now
 Mourns with every leafy bough—
 Mourneth our new Helicon
 'Mid her springs—wert living on,
 And living, shouldst thy days possess
 In renown and happiness,
 O'er Pallas' Flock to bear the sway;
 Nor hadst, voyaging astray,
 Fared in Charon's bark to this
 Brink of Death's abhorr'd abyss.

35

But, alack, Persephone
 Slit thy thin-spun life when she,
 Fired with indignation, saw
 How many thou from Death's dark maw
 With med'cine's arts to save didst use
 And with herbs of virtuous juice!

40

Chancellor rever'd, I pray
 That thy limbs in quiet may
 'Neath our velvet sward repose,
 And that from thy grave the rose
 And the marigold may grow,
 With hyacinthus' purple cup!
 Then, at life's last summing up,
 May great Æacus² decree
 Such compassion show to thee—
 May, from her Sicilian Isle,
 So the rare and radiant smile
 Of Death's goddess on thee shine,
 That among those Souls divine
 Where the Fields Elysian be
 Thou mayst rove eternally!

45

¹ Our new Delphi . . . Helicon, i.e. Cambridge.

² Plato, *Gorg* 523.

BOOK OF SILVAE, II

(Date November 1626. Age Seventeen)

THIS poem discloses an astonishingly dark region of imagination for a boy of seventeen; and, as a miniature epic with a crude flame-belching Satan in chief eminence, it is a forecast of *Paradise Lost*: a premature proclusion of that masterpiece, ending abruptly. It is also noteworthy in respect to Milton's polemical works; for it shows that he had a native propensity for invective and was not so averse from engaging in controversy as he himself sincerely believed. In composing it he was doubtless influenced by Phineas Fletcher's Latin Gunpowder Plot poem, *Locustae* and *The Purple Island*, as Tillyard remarks, yet was quite sincere, as far as a very young man acquiring a gift for political passion can be sincere. Very naturally, in the circumstances, he falls into inconsistency; condemning the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, although he has presented them as mere dupes of Satan, to 'pains condign' (using the very same adjective, by the way, for the would-be assassins of James I as he employed afterwards in justifying the regicides in his *Ekono-clastes*).

Four Latin Epigrammata on the same subject follow the Elegies in the book as it was arranged by Milton, but they are scarcely more than grimly ingenious variations on the theme that the conspirators intended to blow the 'King and the British Lords' to the Celestial regions. A fifth Epigramma hails the inventor of gunpowder—in *Paradise Lost* it was Satan himself—as a greater Prometheus. They are arranged under explosively sounding titles. '*In Proditionem Bombardicam*' and '*In Inventorem Bombardae*'; and as the Fifth of November was a regular occasion for versifying in English Schools and Colleges in Milton's time, they may be regarded as poetic fireworks. They certainly contain what may be described as flashes of levity.

But the occasion was celebrated, rather, with gravity and solemn thanksgiving for a deliverance from Papal subjection that had occurred not more than twenty-five years before; as in the terms of the appointed prayer in the old 'Book of Common Prayer': 'for the happy Deliverance of King James I and the three Estates of England, from the most traiterous and bloody intended Massacre

by Gunpowder'; and Milton's long hexametric poem was most seriously written. The subject may assuredly be said to have *fired his imagination*; just as the defeat of the Armada inspired him to write the dynamic prayer which forms the peroration to 'Of Reformation . . . in England'.

Reverting to the main significance of the poem, I quote from the description of the Temple of Fame, where the goddess herself is sitting:

. on her pinnacle
Aloft, and all around her lifted head
Innumerable ears prick up, in sort to take
The least of sounds and catch the lightest breath
. Whisp'rd from the ends of this far-spreading earth.

How suggestive, after the foregoing passage, are these lines of the dreadful image of the cornfield at the close of the fourth Book of *Paradise Lost*. Satan stands at bay surrounded by the multitudinous spears when

. . . th' Angelic Squadron bright
Turnd fiere red, sharpening in mooned hornes
Their Phalanx, and began to hemm him round
With ported Spears, as thuck as when a field
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
Her bearded grove of ears.

AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN

On the Fifth of November

SCARCE had devout James, come from farthest north,
 Begun his reign over this Troyborn folk
 And widespread empire of the Albions—
 Scarce had the Bond Inviolable join'd
 This English realm with Caledonia's Scots—
 Scarce was the Peacemaker newly enthron'd Lat. 5
 (Secure of foe, of secret guile secure)
 In wealth and bliss, when that fierce King who rules
 The Acheron's fiery torrent and whom as sire
 The Furies own, from Heav'n's ethereal height,
 Outlaw'd and vagabond, earth's monstrous orb

At random rov'd, the fellows of his crime
 Tells o'er, and faithful followers of his House; 10
 Who after divers lamentable deaths
 Shall of his Kingdom be participant.
 Here in mid-air he kindles direful storms;
 There between minds of friendly full accord
 Builds hatred, conquering states for mutual strife
 Armeth, and lands where Peace's olive thrives 15
 Subverts, and all who unstain'd virtue love
 He (Master of Frauds) unto his realm would add,
 Tempting all hearts as yet unreach'd of sin—
 More, setteth secret snares, invisible nets
 Lays to entrap unwary souls: as when 20
 The Caspian tigress through the wilderness,
 'Neath drowsily winking stars, by moonless night
 Tracks her scared prey; so, girt with azurn flame
 And eddying fume, the Lord of midnight storms
 Seeks to corrupt whole peoples with their towns.
 But now the whitening fields appear, environ'd 25
 Round with wave-echoing cliffs—the country dear
 To Neptune, designate of old by name
 After his son,¹ who swam the seas and dar'd
 With hosting fierce to threat grim Hercules
 Before those cruel times of Troy captiv'd.² 30

When Satan saw this land with feastful peace
 And affluence bless'd, and all her fields o'er-teem'd
 With Ceres' favours, and (which griev'd him more
 Than this) a people worshipping the high
 And holy spirit of the One True God—
 O then indeed forth from his bosom brake
 Such sighs, hell-flames, and lurid sulphurous reek 35
 Stench-breeding as Typhoeus wont of old
 (Portentous bulk, whom Jove 'neath Etna pent)

¹ A legendary son named Albion.

² Captiv'd as in *S.A.* 33; Troy, a reference to the Brutus legend.

Spew forth with noisome gape in Sicily.
 His eyes blaze sparks, and like to clatter'd iron,
 Or spear-point against spear-point harshly jarr'd,
 His adamantine fangs, edge gnash'd on edge,
 Grind: Sight more lamentable saw I not, 40
 The whole world roam'd! This rebel folk alone
 Contemn my yoke, and maugre all my arts
 Remain o'erstrong. But if my efforts aught
 Avail, they shall not long enjoy exempt
 From vengeance and requital. These declar'd,
 On pitchy wings he swims the liquid air; 45
 And wheresoe'er he flies, the trouting winds
 Precede his course contrarious; the dense clime
 Thickens with glare of thunderbolts frequent.
 Now had he cross'd swift-wing'd the frosty Alp,
 Holding the frontiers of Ausonia:
 Upon his left hand lay the Appenine
 Stormbreeding, and the antique land Sabine; 50
 Upon his right spread forth Etruria, fam'd
 For sorceries: thee, Tiber, too, he saw
 Give Thetis stealthy kisses. Flying thence,
 On Mars-born Romulus' citadel he lit.

Late twilight's shades uncertain had return'd,
 Whenas the wearer of the Triple Crown, 55
 Circling entire the City, bare aloft
 His bread-made gods; himself, the while, of men
 Upshoulder'd high. Before him, supple-kneed,
 Went kings, and endless train Friars Mendicant,
 Wax tapers in their hands (stone-blind they wear
 Their lives out, bred in dark Cimmerian night!). 60
 The temple reach'd, fair-lit with cressets ranged—
 Saint Peter's Eve it was—their thunderous hymns
 Re-echoing fill'd the hollow domes and void
 Inane: as when the Winegod Bromius¹ howls,

¹ i. e. Bacchus.

Or Bromius' crew on Cadmean Aracynth,¹ 65
 Chaunting their phrenzied rites: with glassy wave
 Of clear translucence, shock'd Asopus trembles;
 Loud-bellowing Cithaeron,² hollow rock, responds.

These rites, at length, in solemn sort perform'd:
 Now silent Night had quit the aged arms
 Of Erebus, and soon with scourge of whip 70
 Her chariot-team drave headlong—Typhlos blind,
 Fierce black-man'd Melanchaetes, Siope
 The torpid (of infernal sire begot),
 And shaggy Phrix, with the long flowing mane.

Meanwhile, the king-subduer, heir to the realm
 Of Phlegeton, his chamber gain'd (nor doth 75
 That secret paramour pass barren nights³
 Without fair mistress), had but scarcely clos'd
 His eyes in peace, when the swart Lord of Shades,
 King of the Silent Dead, whose prey is man,
 Stood by the couch in borrow'd shape disguis'd: 80
 With counterfeited snows his temples gleam'd;
 A long beard pendulous his breast conceal'd—
 His gown of ashen hue with trail of skirt
 Sweeping the ground. To rearward of his crown
 Smooth-shaven, hung the cowl; and, lest his arts
 Should want in aught, a cord of hempen knot
 Begirt his lusty loins; his lagging feet
 In openwork of window'd sandals clad. 85
 E'en such (the fable runs) went Francis⁴ once
 Alone in the untrodden wilderness
 Among foul lairs of beasts, and though himself
 Unsainted still, unto the sylvan tribes

¹ A mountain or range, here (as in *Ecl.* ii. 24) between Attica and Boeotia.

² Between Boeotia and Megaris, sacred to Bacchus.

³ See note at end of poem.

⁴ Probably of Assisi, but St. F. Xavier also tamed wild beasts and had 'windowed' shoes. The 'sylvan tribes' were doubtless the birds.

The saintly message of salvation gave,
 And wolves—and e'en the Lybick lions—tam'd.
 Mask'd in such garb's disguise, the Serpent sly
 Insinuating from detestable lips, 90
 Pour'd forth these accents low: Sleep'st thou, my son?—
 Thou of the Faith forgetful? Thou of thy flock
 Oblivious—while thy throne and triple crown
 Are scoff'd, O Holy Father, by a race
 Barbaric, born beneath the northern skies;
 For lo, how Britain's bowmen spurn thy sway! 95
 Come, rouse thee, rouse from sloth, who art ador'd
 E'en of Rome's Emperor!¹—Thou, for whom the Gates
 Of vaulted heaven fly open! Break these spirits
 Swelling with wanton pride, and teach them, Thou— 100
 These impious ones—what power thy malison hath,
 O Keeper of the Apostolick Keys!
 Forget not to avenge the shatter'd Fleet
 Hesperian, and the Spaniard's ensigns whelm'd
 In ocean's gulf,² and bodies of the saints
 On shameful gallows hang'd, in the late reign
 Of the Amazonian Virgin!³ But if Thou, 105
 Drowsing on couch of down, wilt spare to crush
 The waxing power of the foe, full soon will they,
 With men-at-arms filling the Tyrrhene Sea
 Plant their gay standards on the Aventine;
 The reliques of your fathers will they break— 110
 Yea, burn with fire, and soon with foot profane
 Trample upon the sacred neck of him
 Whose shoes e'en Princes once were fain to kiss!
 Yet do not these unto the open field
 Of war provoke, since fruitless were thy toil.
 Spend thy whole skill in guile; for is't not right
 To stretch for hereticks what nets you will? 115
 Lo, their great King⁴ calls now to parliament

¹ i.e. of the Holy Roman Empire.² The Armada.³ Elizabeth.⁴ James.

From their remotest shores his commoners, peers
 Temp'ral and spiritual, in robes of state,
 With venerable white locks. These blow to the winds,
 Limb-meal and all into fine ashes blasted 120
 With flame of nitrous powder inject beneath
 The Hall's foundations where they should convene.
 Therefore, first, warn whoever faithful be
 In England of thy purpos'd deed; for none
 Among thy flock dare contradict thy hest.
 Then, while the foe with sudden fear appall'd,
 Is stricken dumb at such calamity, 125
 Let fierce Frank, Spaniard fell, the land invade.
 Thus lastly shall the Marian age return,
 Thou bend the warlike English to thy sway,
 Then fear thou nought, but all thy Holy Men
 And Women (saintly powers), whomso ye praise
 In solemn festival, propitious know.
 Craftily he spake; then, doff'd his garb's disguise,
 To joyless Lethe, realm abhorrent, fled. 130

Now, while the roseate Dawn flings open wide
 Heav'n's Orient Portals, and with light's return
 Invests the earth with gold (Dawn mourning still
 Her swart son Memnon and his grievous end:¹
 Wherefore betooms she all the mountain-tops 135
 With tears ambrosial), the Porter of the Gate
 Of that star-vaulted Hall drave from her doors
 Sleep, and roll'd back Night's pleasing shapes and dreams.

There is a place with everduring gloom
 Of darkness girt, where huge foundations lie
 Of architecture ponderous—ruins vast 140
 Age-old, but now the den of Murder foul
 And fork-tongu'd Treason² (both of Discord wild

¹ *Od.* iv. 188; xi. 522.

² Spenser, *F.Q.* III. vii. 21, &c. (Warton).

Whelp'd at one birth): here amid rended rocks
 Of quarry'd stone, inhumate bones of men
 And sword-slain corpses lie; here blackmoor Guile
 Sits ever rolling eyes askance, and Strife 145
 And Calumny, whose jaws grow venom'd stings,
 Pale Phrenzie and Death in thousand forms appear;
 Here Fright, here blanc-cheek'd Horror, flap their wings
 About the place; here without cease the thin
 And unessential ghosts through mute silence
 Howl, and the conscious Earth clots, soak'd with gore. 150
 Meanwhile, within the bowels of the cave,
 Her owners, Treachery and Murder, lurk
 Shuddering, and—though with none pursuing them
 Within the cave (cave whose black rocks appal,
 Shagg'd with Death's shades)—yet with reverted looks
 The felon pair, each his self way, take flight.

Babylon's¹ high priest these Roman ruffians hails 155
 (Of agelong fealty prov'd), and stern bespeaks:
 Far on the western confines of the globe
 Dwells 'mid circumfluous seas a folk of me
 Abhorr'd, and of wise Nature judg'd unfit
 To be conjoin'd at all with world of ours.
 Thither, I charge you, swiftly bend your course. 160
 Them with Tartarean powder, race accurst,
 Into thin air both king and princes blow!
 But whoso be with loyal ardour fir'd
 For the true Faith, them parties to your plot
 And furtherers executant receive.
 He spake; obey'd forthwith the twins severe. 165
 But he who doth the slow-bow'd welkin bend
 And lightens from his airy citadel,
 Looks down, and smiling at the vain attempts
 Of men perverse, will now himself defend
 His people's cause.

¹ Babylon here = Rome

There is a place ('tis said) 170
 From Asia as from fertile Europe far,¹
 Looking towards the Mareotick Lake:²
 Here Fame, the Titans' sister,³ situate hath
 Her Tower exalted, brass-built, echoing, broad;
 Uplifted nearer to the glittering stars
 Than Athos, or on Ossa Pelion piled.⁴
 Here stand a thousand gates and porches wide;
 A thousand windows, and her spacious courts 175
 Gleam through thin walls transpicious. A throng
 Thick-swarming here a confus'd murmur makes,
 Like cluster'd flies that round the milking-pails⁵
 And o'er the wattled sheepcotes buzz and hum 180
 When to the cope of heaven in summer's drouth
 The Dog-star climbs. Here Fame as mistress sits
 (Her Mother's veng'ress) on her pinnacle
 Aloft; and all around her lifted head
 Innumerable ears prick up, in sort to take
 The least of sounds and catch the lightest breath
 Whisper'd from the ends of this far-spreading earth;
 Nor ever was, O Argus (thou who wert 185
 The Heifer's⁶ unjust warden), thy false mask
 Spangled with eyes more numerous—eyes that were
 Too wakeful e'er in silent sleep to drowse
 (Surveying far and wide all lands below):
 With these, forsooth, she useth oft to search
 Places that lack our Day—e'en those that are 190
 To every ray of sun impenetrable.
 Thus, all of heard and seen with thousand tongues
 Babbling, she poureth forth to whom you will,
 O'er-rash; and now with false extenuates true,⁷
 Now with trickt speeches truth advantageth.
 Yet thou, O Fame, hast of my song deserv'd 195

¹ *Ov. Met.* xii. 39, &c.; *Æn.* iv. 184, &c.² In Egypt.³ *Æn.* iv. 178, &c.⁴ *Ov. Met.* i. 151, &c.; *Georg.* i. 281.⁵ *Il.* ii. 469, &c.⁶ i. e. of Io; *Ov. Met.* i. 588, &c.⁷ *Æn.* iv. 188.

Praises for one good deed, than which was ne'er
 Done better: worthy, then, of song art thou!
 Nor shall I e'er repent to have sung thee, too,
 In lay prolong'd. We English, by thy means
 Defended, render thee thanksgivings due,
 Thou fickle goddess! For to thee did Jove,
 Who rules the forces of the eternal fires—
 His previous bolt dispatch'd, while earth yet shook— 200
 Address these words: And art thou silent, Fame?
 Or hath that impious band of Papists who
 Against me and my Britons have conspir'd,
 Thee quite escap'd, with that unheard of slaughter
 Plann'd for the scepter'd James? Thus far he spake.
 Fame heard forthwith the Thunderer's behest;
 And, though so swift before, she now put on 205
 Loud-buzzing wings, and all her slender form
 Bedeck'd with plumage pied. In her right hand
 A sounding trump Calabrian brass she took,
 Then oar'd with spreaded vans the buxom air.
 Nor was't enough that she should thus prevent 210
 Each flying cloud, but now outstript the winds
 Themselves, and now the horses of the sun:
 Through England's cities first she sayings dark
 And obscure whisperings spreads (her wont), and then
 With shrilling voice forth-publisheth the guile
 And whole abhorred plot of Treachery.
 Nor deeds alone—dire deeds to tell!—reveals,
 But naming authors of the crime, holds not 215
 Her peace, but blabbeth ambush laid in nooks
 Conceal'd. Aghast to hear these rumours, youths
 And maidens, too, and seniors worn with eld,
 Gasp; and all ages to the heart at once
 Are pierc'd with sense of such disaster huge. 220
 Meanwhile, the Heavenly Power ethereal, mov'd
 With pity for his people, hath frustrate
 The Papists' savage and barbaric acts.

They straight captiv'd, are hal'd to pains condign;
But unto God are vows of thankfulness
And grateful incense paid. With genial fires
Of joy the cross-roads smoke; where thronging youth 225
Tumultuous dance—nor is in all the year
Than Fifth November any day more fam'd.

NOTE —*The odious charges of 300 years ago are only kept in the text to meet the modern demand for completeness.*

BOOK OF SILVAE, III

(Date 1626 Age Seventeen.)

'ON the 5th of October 1626, or only a fortnight after the death of Dr. Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester,' writes Professor Masson, 'there died another prelate, Dr. Nicholas Felton, Bishop of Ely. Like Andrewes, he was a Cambridge man, of Pembroke Hall, and he had, like Andrewes, been for some time Master of that Hall before he was made a Bishop Milton, who had just written his Elegy on Andrewes's death (*Elegia Tertia*), paid a similar honour to his brother-bishop, but employed Iambic verse of alternate Trimeters and Dimeters instead of Elegiacs. Hence this piece on Felton comes among the *Silvae*.'

AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN

On the Death of the Bishop of Ely

MOIST cheeks with weeping stain'd were mine;
Eyes still wet and swoln with brine,
Left by many a falling tear
Which duty shed beside the bier,
While the last sad rites I paid Lat. 5
To Winchester's beloved shade:
When Fame, hundred-tongu'd (beshrew
Her for presage passing true
When she blabs of loss or woe!)
Through rich Britain's towns did go,
Where the sons of Neptune¹ dwell, 10
Scattering the tidings fell
That thou wert by death subdu'd—
By Death and the Iron Sisterhood—
Thou, the glory of our race;
Thou who didst the mitre grace
In the Island old to fame,
That of eels hath took her name.

¹ i.e. descendants of Albion, s. of Neptune.

Instantly, hot wrath opprest, 15
 Surging high, my troubled breast,
 Oft making me to dedicate
 To her tombs the Queen of Fate!
 Ne'er did Ovid's *Ibis*¹ pour
 Deeper, direr curse of yore;
 Ne'er the Grecian bard² invoke 20
 More malisons for troth-plight broke
 On Lycambes' perfidy,
 And his daughter, false as he!
 But while deep cursings fill'd my breath
 Devoting Death himself to death,³
 Aw-strook, I heard strange sounds like these
 Wafted on the gentle breeze: 25

Cease this blind wrath, this glassy spleen,⁴
 These blust'rings vain! Why hast thou been
 O'er-rash to flout Celestial Powers
 Safe from all assail of ours—
 Gods o'er-rathe to anger wrought? 30
 Death was not as thou hadst thought
 In thy fond delusion's height,
 The sable daughter of old Night;
 Nor Erebus', nor Fury's spawn,
 Nor was ingender'd ere time's dawn
 'Neath Chaos waste; but from on high
 Sent down from out the starry sky 35
 The ripen'd sheaves⁵ of Jove to bind,
 And from this gross corporeal rind
 The prison'd souls of men to call
 To light and airs celestial,
 As when the fleet Hours wake the Day,
 (Daughters of Jove and Themis they). 40

¹ Ovid's poem of invective against an unknown foe.

² Archilochus.

³ 'Devoting Death himself to death'—Cowper.

⁴ Hor. *Sat.* II. iii. 141.

⁵ 'ripen'd sheaves'—C.

Before the Eternal Father's face
 She cites the dead, but drives apace
 The obdurate¹ duly to his doom
 In the sad Tartarean gloom
 Of Pluto's subterranean Hall.
 I rejoic'd to hear her call;
 From sordid fleshly fetters freed,
 I with warriors wing'd did speed
 Jubilant to the stellar sphere:
 As of old the aged seer²
 Did in fiery chariot fly
 With his horsemen to the sky.
 To me Bootes' wagon bright,
 Slow with cold, brought no affright:
 Not the ugly Scorpion's claws,
 Not Orion's sword did cause
 My flight to fail! Out-towering clean
 The globed sun's resplendent sheen,
 Far beneath my feet I see
 The orb of triple Hecate³
 While, as wont, with golden rein
 She doth her dragon yoke refrain.
 Past the planets rank'd I soar,
 Past the Milky Torrent's shore,
 Admiring oft my new-found rate
 Of speed, till to the Olympian Gate
 Of Pearl I come, and (rising sheer)
 That Crystalline⁴ Palace clear,
 With emerald y-paven court.
 But here must I to dumb resort;
 For who of mortal sire begot
 Could paint that ever-blissful spot?
 Enow it is for me on high
 To taste heav'n's joys eternally.

45

50

55

60

65

¹ Obdurate: *P.L.* i. 58; *xii.* 205.² Elijah 2 Kings ii. 11.³ The triform Moon-goddess: *Æn.* iv. 511.⁴ Crystalline, *P.L.* iii. 482, etc.

BOOK OF SILVAE, IV

(Date 1628. Age Nineteen)

PART of the Commencement, or Ceremonial at the conferring of degrees, which took place at Cambridge at the end of each academic year, consisted of debates in Latin between an appointed Respondent in each faculty, who furnished the thesis under discussion, and successive 'Opponents'. The Respondent had to read verses illustrative of the proposition which he maintained, and while he was doing so the beadles provided the Doctors present with printed copies of his verses

After the Divinity Act, or debate, which took place in the early morning in St. Mary's Church, and was a solemn business, the Philosophical Act and Graduation in Arts was held, usually about midday. This was more elaborate, and admitted, says Masson, a 'great deal of liberty and even of fun'.

Milton states in his letter of 2 July 1628 to Alexander Gill the younger, who had been his tutor at St. Paul's School, that he had written some verses for a Fellow of his College who was going to be the Respondent at the Philosophical Act, and who had no time or inclination to write them himself.

Either the present poem or the Plato-Aristotle burlesque (p. 66) may be the accommodating verses in question. They were written for the Commencement of 1 July 1628, and the fact that Milton wrote to Gill so speedily to tell him of his gratifying commission, enclosing, as he says, a copy of the verses, betrays a youthful pride and his characteristic impetuosity.

Masson seems to conclude that the poem was *Naturam non pati Senium*; and this is likely enough, as the theory that the physical universe was degenerating was at that time attracting much interest; while the enthusiasm for Platonic studies did not reach Cambridge till some years later. The question for or against deterioration, as Tillyard has pointed out, had become controversial by the publication, in the year before Milton wrote this poem, of *An Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* by George Hakewill: who contended on the sociological side of his subject that the Renaissance and the Reformation were together one of several signal improvements in the lot of man foretold by Scripture.

Hakewill makes an eloquent appeal on behalf of these blessings 'for an improvement in the 'matter of manners', and, banking all on the future, sounds this stirring blast.

'The first step to inable a man to the atchueving of great designs is to bee perswaded that by endeavour hee is able to atchueve, the next not to be perswaded that whatsoever hath not yet bin done, cannot be done. . . . If we excell not all ages that have gone before us, it is only because we are wanting to our selves.'

Bacon's scientific genius was having its influence in combating both the renascent literary veneration for antiquity and the comparatively pessimistic temper expressed in the incomparable prose of Sir Thos. Browne.

Milton, who deals only with the cosmic theme in his poem, took the optimistic view, like the idealist that he was. The heavens and the earth would eventually pass away in the Last Day's conflagration, but—despite Hebrews 1 11-12—they would not 'wax old as doth a garment'; nor would they collapse before their allotted time like an ill-constructed building.

Milton was influenced in this view not primarily, however, by the *Novum Organum*, but through Hakewill, and in a free-spirited way, by the Bible: the real and original source—by a process of selection and distillation—of his religious philosophy in general. Ovid and Spenser successively diverted and enchanted, while Plato afterwards idealized, his emotional atmosphere; but throughout his life the Biblical foundation of his religion, which Hakewill assisted him to bring into focus with his political opinions, remained unimpaired by time.

Is Nature Impaired by Time?

AN, how self-wearied droops Man's wandering mind
 With measureless errors maz'd, that wrap his breast
 In palpable obscure: a night as blind
 As that of Oedipus! Precipitant
 Unwisdom drives her by her own deeds to test
 The deeds of Heav'n; her own edicts¹ to hold Lat. 5
 Equal to laws of old

¹ edicts—*P.L.* v 798.

Engraven on unwasting adamant,
Limiting Fate's plan—which Time's dissolve defies—
To her own volent hour that passing dies.¹

Shall Nature's face, then, drawn to spare and dry,
Gloom wrinkle-furrow'd?—She of whom were born
All things, our general Mother—need to mourn 10
The wither'd womb of age? Confessing eld,
Shall she who went with starry head upheld,
Pace with slow steps irresolute, tremblingly?
Shall foul antiquity, or ravening maw
Of ceaseless years, with rust and draff they draw,
Afflict the stars? Or shall unsated² Time,
Full cram his vitals with his own Sire sublime, 15
Engorging Heav'n? Can unforeseeing Jove
Have fortified his citadels above
To check such harm, or from Time's evil freed,
Their courses everlasting have decreed?
Shall time e'er be when heav'n's high-storey'd floor 20
Collapses ruining with outrageous roar?
Shall with that shock convuls'd, both poles withal
Grate their harsh thunder, and from his highbuilt Hall
Olympian Jove downfall?
Shall Pallas, too, who bare that shield of dread
(The naked horror of the Gorgon's head)
Fall, as of old the son of Juno, thrown
In headlong rout from heav'n's high grunsel down 25
To Lemnos? Or shalt thou, O Phoebus, vie³
With thine own son, perdition—hurl'd from the sky
In swift careering chariot precipitously?
Shall Ocean, when thy lamp extinguish'd is,
Smoke, and from his astonied waves a hiss
Of sound sinister⁴ rise?
Shall the firm foot of Haemus split, till flies 30

¹ 'hours that pass and die'—Cowper.

³ To vie wisdom with his Parliament—*Esikonokl.* xi.

² 'unsated'—Cowper.

⁴ sinister—*P L* x 886.

His lofty top asunder—the whole Hill-chain
 • Acroceraunian, missive flung amain,
 Clash justling in the bottomless abyss,
 Affrighting Stygian Dis¹
 (E'en Dis who had us'd them erst for warfare rude
 'Gainst the high gods in that fraternal feud)?

Nay, the Almighty Father, on the sum
 Of things consulting,² more securely bas'd
 The constellations, and unerring plac'd 35
 In poise the Scales of Fate adjusted plumb!
 In supreme order thus to move, He taught
 All things that are, each to perpetuate
 Eternally his course predestinate:
 Thus is the Prime Wheel of Creation brought
 To turn in course diurnal and to steer
 With link'd revolve each softly rolling sphere;
 Hence Saturn's motion slacks not, nor less bright
 Gleams with red glare malign, Mars' armed helm; 40
 E'en Phoebus shall his youthful bloom rehearse,
 Nor shall his sloping axle's glow o'erwhelm
 Earth's teeming vales, but still with friendly light
 Through the same signs the starry spheres traverse;
 Still riseth fair from odorous India's side 45
 The star³ that on Olympus' snowy height
 His skyey flocks doth shepherd, with the morn
 Calling them home but leading them at eve
 To pasture in the skies (Time's realms receive
 Hence the twin hues that Day from Night divide);
 Still bright Diana's alternating horn
 Waxes and wanes, her arms expanded wide 50
 Encompassing the empyrean blue;
 And still the elements their pact keep true;
 Thus, too, the lurid bolt with wonted roar
 Shattereth the rocky shore.

Rude-voiced as e'er, the wild North-West to-day

¹ = Pluto.

² *P L.* vi. 673, &c.

³ Venus.

Tempests the void; nor milder grown the North
 With cold less keen exhales all winter forth, 55
 And rolls his billowy clouds nigh-hand to flay

The harness Scythian.

Still doth the Sea-god cleave Sicilian
 Pelorus' foot; still, o'er wide waters, swell
 The hollow roarings of his herald's¹ shell.

Nor is Aegaeon² (bulk unwieldy) grown
 Less huge, whom those leviathans amain—
 Isles Balearick—on their backs sustain.

Nor has Earth's primal force diminish'd flown; 60
 Nor weakens. Narcissus yet his fragrance keeps;
 And that fair youth for whom Apollo weeps—
 Thy friend, O Venus (thou whom Cyprus bore)—
 Is comely as before.

Nor e'er did shamefast Earth more treasures hold:
 Gems 'neath her seas, 'neath hills the baneful gold. 65
 This Order of the World, most justly true,
 Shall then endure till latest time ensue:

Then the Last Day's conflagrance Earth shall waste
 From pole to pole, with heav'n's huge vault embrac'd,
 And all this Universal Frame entire
 Shall flame as on one vast funereal pyre!

¹ Triton's.

² *Il. i.* 403, &c.

BOOK OF SILVAE, V

(Date. 1628. Age. Nineteen.)

THIS poem, which (as stated in the introductory remarks to *Is Nature Impaired by Time?*) is probably an academic exercise, takes the form of a burlesque, in which Aristotle is represented as inquiring in what part of the physical universe may be found Plato's Idea of Archetypal Man.

Plato, of course, never asserted that his Idea or ideal Archetype of man was to be found in the physical universe. In fact, Aristotle's criticism in his *Metaphysics* was that it was too remote from it altogether.

Plato held (*Soph.* 246) that his Ideas alone had true being; whereas material phenomena were ephemeral, and thus could not be essentially known. These Ideas were not in their physical objects; and this is Aristotle's chief difficulty, for he cannot understand how substance can be separated from that of which it is the substance, or knowledge of the essence of things be derived from an essence that is external to the things themselves. How could these static abstractions, he objected, possibly explain life and change? To him it was too sharp a duality. Some interposed medium, some universal element, was necessary. There must be internal principles of things—not such Platonic forms or patterns—to account for the multifarious movements and expressions of biology and history.

I suggest that Plato's conception is illustrated by his dictum that time is the moving shadow of eternity; for if eternity can be supposed to be the source of this cosmic shadow-play, the meaning of the latter is certainly, in Plato's sense, external to it and can only be understood by transcendental cognition. In other words, the knowledge derived from phenomena is not a knowledge of the phenomena themselves but of the fundamental principle behind and beyond them of which they serve as a symbolical manifestation.¹

Warton says that he had found this piece 'inserted at full length as a specimen of unintelligible metaphysics' in a scarce book of burlesques published in or about 1716. But it is quite intelligible,

¹ The phenomena, however, possess a kind of secondary reality and significance. The shadow-play is organic, not mechanical

of course, and, in common with all good burlesques, obvious, superficial, and distorting.

How far Milton understood Plato's conception when he wrote this academic exercise; whether he had not as yet come into the enthusiasm for Plato's philosophy which he afterwards expressed in the *Apology for Smectymnuus*, as also, of course, in his post-dated addendum to Elegy VII, whether he intended by his extravaganzas merely to exhibit in distorted relief the antinomy between the two philosophers; whether he was laughing at one, or at both, are questions which, in Sir Thos Browne's commodious phrase, we 'leave to the philosopher'.

Plato's 'Ideas'

(As Criticized by Aristotle)

SAY, Goddesses that guard each hallow'd grove,¹
 And thou, y-clept in heav'n Mnemosyne,
 Blest Mother of the Nine-fold Deity;²
 Thou, too, Eternity,³ at ease reclin'd
 In some vast cave remote—expert to mind
 The records and the fix'd decrees of Jove, Lat 5
 Feast-days and daybooks of the gods above:
 Say whose Similitude skill'd Nature's plan
 First chose as pattern for the race of Man?

Wasteless, eterne, coeval with the sky—
 One, universal, in God's image wrought— 10
 No twin of Pallas Maid assuredly,
 Dwelt he in Jove's own brain, an unborn thought:
 Add that his nature, common unto all,
 Hath being separate, dividual;
 And, marvellous to tell, his single place 15
 Is circumscrib'd to one fix'd share of space.
 Haply he wanders through the ten-spher'd heights,
 Companions the sempiternal Lights,

¹ Diana and her train

² The Nine Muses, daughters of Memoria or Mnemosyne.

³ Spenser, *F. Q.* II. IV. 41.

Or in yon orb'd moon inhabiteth
 Earth's neighbour close, or haply slumbereth
 • Drowsily where souls imbodiment await
 By Lethe waters of oblivion; 20
 Or somewhere earth's remotest shores upon,
 Stalks Archetypal Man with Titan gait,
 Heaving aloft his head to terrify
 The gods—in bulk exceeding Atlas' size,
 Upshoulderer of the star-besprinkled skies.

Yet none like him Tiresias' trance hath seen 25
 (Whom blindness fill'd far more with inward light);
 Nor hath by Hermes' seers sagacious been
 Observ'd his shape, in the dead hush of night;
 Nor did the Assyrian priest¹ who wont so well
 The long descent of ancient Ninus² tell, 30
 And antique Belus and of the renown
 Of great Osiris,³ aught of him make known;
 Nor e'en did he—though triply counted wise,
 The thrice-great Hermes,⁴ skill'd in mysteries—
 To Isis' votaries
 Bequest of portent such as this devise.

Then thou who first, O fam'd perennial Star
 Of Academe,⁵ such monsters didst invent 35
 To haunt thy Schools, yet didst all poets bar⁶
 From thy Republic, wilt at once recall
 Thine exiles, since thou now art shown of all
 The greatest Fabler—or thyself be sent,
 Though the State's Founder, into banishment.

¹ Berōsus, priest of Bel at Babylon, c. 250 B.C. *Not* (as Warton) Sanchuniathon, who was Phoenician.

² Legend King, husband of Semiramis ³ Legend King, husband of Isis

⁴ Hermes (Gk.) = Eg. Thoth, legend author of the 42 Hermetic Books, cp. *Il Pens* 88.

⁵ Plato's Academy.

⁶ Plato, *Rep.* iii 398, &c.

BOOK OF SILVAE, VI

(Date: probably about 1632, when Milton was aged twenty-three)

MILTON's father, whose Christian name was also John, was descended from an Oxford Roman Catholic family, but became a Protestant in his youth, and is said to have been disinherited on this account by his father, Richard Milton, a yeoman farmer of Stanton St. John, Oxfordshire, who was heavily fined in 1601 for obstinate non-attendance at the parish church.

Unlike his father, John Milton the elder was by no means a severe parent, as the present poem testifies. He had destined his poet son, apparently in conformity with his own wishes, for the Church. But the Church had become dominated by Archbishop Laud, that *Reichsbishop* of English history, and was accordingly to any free Protestant spirit effectually closed.

Thus 'Church-outed by the Prelats', as Milton later expressed his position, he seems to have settled down quite complacently outside the Ecclesiastical pale. He may have felt a good deal relieved. It was really fortunate, as he must have realized sooner or later, for his religion could never have become a professional calling. He would have behaved very unprofessionally in such a position. A priest to himself, he had a religion of his own, which was translated out of the Bible, and in some places very freely translated. Also, of course, in such an intelligence it developed. An instance is suggested in this poem itself, in the lines:

Ourselves await (*regain'd our native Sky*)
Time's halcyon pauses, tranced Eternity,
When we, our brows with golden circlets proud,
Progressing each celestial sanctuary,¹
To soft-tongu'd quill-beat marry our dulcet lays.

The conception suggested in these verses is, indeed, very different from Milton's later eschatology as revealed in his *De Doctrina Christiana*. He came to believe that soul and body were one and indivisible, and accordingly perished together—to be resurrected on the Day of Judgement.² This connects up with the subject of

¹ Cp. 'in supereminence of *beatifick vision* progressing the *dateless and irrevoluble Circle of Eternity*': *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*, 1641 (Bk II)

² Cp. the 'fame' passages in *Mansus* and *Lycidas*

Milton's changed opinions—if Tillyard is right in thinking that they changed—concerning chastity and marriage, for if soul and body are thus united, the body may be considered to be spiritual no less than the soul.

Also, the verses are significant of Milton's grand individualism: it was his *own* songs that he would sing in Eternity—an expression philosophized in *Paradise Lost* in Satan's assertion that the mind constitutes its heaven or hell

Milton had good reason, therefore, to regard his church-exiled position with equanimity. To his father, however, the situation was not so satisfactory. He was a business man, a scrivener. that is to say, an attorney and law-stationer in one. He was also a musician, an eminent composer. His house—at the Spread Eagle, Bread Street, Cheapside—where he had started business in 1600, was doubtless the resort of the best composers of the day; so that there must have been many musical evenings in that pleasant household.

This side of the scrivener's activities was very congenial to Milton, who loved music and had been taught by his father to sing and to play the organ. But, as is betrayed in his very first *Elegy*, he disliked intensely what he knew of legal matters, having, perhaps, accompanied his father to the Law Courts to 'peal' his 'ears' with 'cries distasteful', to watch the performances of what he calls in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* a 'fee'd gamester'. Compare (of a preacher) 'the finical goosery of your neat surmon-actor'. In *Of Education* he commiserates all those who are 'allured to the trade of Law, grounding their purposes not on the prudent, and heavenly contemplation of justice and equity which was never taught them, but on the promising and pleasing thoughts of litigious terms, fat contentions, and flowing fees'.

His father does not appear to have had any such aversion to the law; and his younger son, Christopher, in fact, became a knighted Judge; although he was a heavily fined delinquent, and according to Toland, 'more resembling his Grandfather than his Father or Brother, was of a very superstitious nature, and a man of no Parts or Ability'.

Nothing could have been more natural, in the circumstances, therefore, than that Milton's father should propose—as he did, no doubt—that his son, whose power in argument he must often have witnessed, should become a barrister. Probably they argued about

it—the father maintaining against the son's objections that the law was a necessary activity and consequently a legitimate profession; the son replying somewhat satirically.

All argument, however, if argument there had been, was surely terminated by *Ad Patrem* itself, in which, as Tillyard says, with 'consummate (and probably unconscious) firmness Milton puts his father in his place'. This filial service, however, is rendered with profound affection, in a suave, charming, ratiocinative style, afterwards more seriously employed by Milton in his *Areopagitica*, when he was appealing to the Parliament, and in his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence* when he was addressing the Deity.

In the course of a deeply felt acknowledgement of the educational advantages that he had received at his hands, Milton compliments his father upon never having *ordered* him to make money out of the law, although he may have reflected that it was not unfortunate that his father had earned a good deal himself through his connexions with that lucrative profession. Milton himself did not earn a penny until he was well over thirty.

The insouciant humour reminds one of an earlier instance the lightly satirical complaisance with which Milton treats his rustication from Cambridge in *Elegy I*.

Ad Patrem reveals that Milton's father—no singular case in such a lover of music—was very deficient in the poetical sense. He denied, indeed, in a book that he wrote entitled *The Six-fold Politician*, that he held the 'skill and art of poetry in base account, but only the abusers of it', but he added that 'poetry may be both noblemens and schollars afternoone, and a successive exercise and remission from the bent of graver studies and affairs'—and wrote himself one of the worst metrical compositions that have ever been known. Although Milton delighted in music himself, he must often have overborne his father in such an argument as he introduces in the poem concerning the respective qualities of poetry and music, the latter 'void of words, sense, and eloquent numbers'.

When John Milton, Senior, started his business at the age of thirty-seven, he married—at least, it was probably in 1600—Sarah Jeffrey, who is said by John Philips, Milton's nephew, to have been descended from a genteel Welsh family, the Castons; but according to Wood (whose authority was Aubrey), from the Bradshaws.

They had five children: Anne, John, Sarah, Tabitha, and

Christopher,¹ but only Anne (Toland calls her *Anna*), John, and Christopher survived into maturity. Anne became Mrs. Philips.

About 1632—in July of which year Milton left Cambridge—the scrivener retired from business, and went to live at Horton, Buckinghamshire. There and then Milton began what he had resolved upon, a period of solitary study which lasted until his departure, some six years later, on his Italian tour—a further educational bounty from his father. Towards its close this period was overcast by the death, on 3 April 1637, of Milton's mother. As the mother of a man of genius is much more important from a psychological point of view than his father, it is indeed regrettable that so little is known of Sarah Milton. Milton says, in his *Defensio Secunda*, that she was one who 'scattered blessings around her, especially amongst those of her neighbours who were poor and unfortunate'. Would that he had written an 'Ad Matrem'!

To my Father

Now I desire that the Pierian Source
 May through my breast
 In fertilizing rivers wind her course,
 And that the waters of the Forked Crest
 Their brimming flood betwixt my lips may pour;
 That so my Muse, her slenderer strains forsworn,
 On wing adventurous borne,
 Father rever'd, to honour thee may soar! Lat 5
 Light task, this little song I meditate
 (Howe'er it please); but offering know I none
 That fitlier could thy bounties paragon.
 Then, since no costliest gifts could match thy store,
 How could bare thanks which empty words transmit
 For thy rich bounties be requital fit? 10

¹ Joseph Hunter, *Milton A Sheaf of Gleanings* (1850), in which the dates of baptism are quoted—except Anne's—from the Register of All Hallows, Bread Street. Masson says that there were six children, but names only the surviving three. Verity also says that there were six—and, without naming any, states that the 'third child was the poet'. Masson and Verity are great authorities, I cannot explain these discrepancies

Yet I herein display my whole estate;
 Yon sheet doth all my wealth enumerate:
 Resources which, at best compute, are nought—
 Save what my golden Muse, what Clio gave,
 Born of my dreams in some secluded cave, 15
 Or from the shadows of Parnassus caught,
 Where those deep groves of sacred laurel wave.
 Yet song—divine Song—do not scorn (I plead)
 The poet's task, which most of all shows trace
 Of birth ethereous and celestial seed—
 Most, too, as heavenly sprung, man's mind doth grace
 With hallow'd sparks from her Promethean reed! 20

Dear to the gods is song—the Song which stirr'd¹
 To her dark Tartarean gulphs strong-shuddering Hell,
 Fast bound the Infernal Powers, and e'en with chain
 Of triple adamant forge the herd
 Of stubborn ghosts could quell!
 In Song the votresses of Phoebus' fane 25
 And wan-lipp'd Sybils² tremulous foretell
 Secrets of distant ages held in store;
 The Priest that doth at festal altars pray,
 Composeth Song, both when he seeks to slay
 The bull (a-strive with gilded horn to gore),
 Or sagely o'er the reeking flesh doth pore
 Divine of things to be,
 Or reads from entrails warm the Fates' decree.
 Ourselves await (regain'd our native Sky) 30
 Time's halcyon pauses, tranced Eternity,
 When we, our brows with golden circlets proud,
 Progressing each celestial sanctuary,
 To soft-tongu'd quill-beat marry our dulcet lays;
 Whereat the stars and the round welkin bow'd
 From pole to answering pole shall echo praise;

¹ Orpheus: *Georg.* iv 471, &c; *Il P.* 105.

² Prophetesses *Æn.* iii. 445-6.

The fiery cherub,¹ too, that doth enring 35
 Their hurrying orbs, with starry quires shall sing
 His interpos'd refrain:
 The unexpressive, the immortal strain,²
 Which the bright blazing Serpent glows to list,
 His searing hisses whist!
 Orion, softening, drops the sword he show'd;
 Atlas (the Moor) less feels his starry load. 40

Time was when Song made princely banquets bright,
 Ere luxury and the wide ingulging maw
 Of Gluttony attain'd their noted height.
 Time was, with moderate cups the board was crown'd
 Whenas at sumptuous feasts the Bard by law
 Of custom sate, his unshorn tresses bound³
 With oak inwreath'd, and sang heroic feat 45
 And deeds of bold emprise, or Chaos vast
 (Wherein of this wide Universe were cast
 The broad foundations), or of gods that crept⁴
 The ground—of Powers divine that acorns eat—
 Of bolts unsought that still 'neath Etna slept.

Last, what avails mere warbling of the voice, 50
 Devoid of words—sense—numbers eloquent?
 Such chaunting may the woodland quires rejoice;
 But not therewith had Orpheus been content,
 Whose song—not lute alone—the rivers stay'd;
 Who to the oaks gave ears; whose singing made 55
 Melt into weeping each departed shade:
 'Tis Song that unto him such praise hath lent.

The sacred Muses, then, disdain no more,
 I pray; nor them to weak and vain decry:
 Muses whose gifts with skill thy mind did store
 To wed a thousand notes with numbers apt

¹ Ezek. i 20; *Æn.* vi 724, &c
³ *Od.* viii 499, &c

² *Lyc.* 176
⁴ Like gods of Egypt.

And modulate the voice melodious, lapt
 In thousand trills of waibled harmony! 60
 Heir to Arion's fame shouldst justly be!
 What marvel, then, if chance thou didst beget
 A destin'd Bard in me,
 And if, in such dear bond of kindship met,
 Our tastes and talents we as kinsmen share?
 Phoebus, desiring thus himself to twin,
 Giving thee gifts, yet some to me did spare. 65
 Hence is it that as sire and son we win
 Dividual¹ lot in his divinity.
 To hate my gentle Muse, though thou dost feign,
 Thou canst not hate her, Father, I maintain:
 Since thou hast ne'er bid me to go where lies
 The broad highway and easier field of gain,
 Where hopes gleam sure of coin in mounded heap;
 Nor halest me to the Bar and laws we keep— 70
 Too often wrench'd; nor with distasteful cries
 Mine ears dost peal: but seeking only power
 My mind well-stor'd with richer wealth to dower
 In deep retirement from the city's roar,²
 Lettest me thus in jocund leisure stride
 As if at Phoebus' side,
 With benediction from our Muses' shore. 75

The old dear dues of sire to son pass'd by,
 Things weightier call. When at thy charge become,
 Good Father, copious in the speech of Rome
 And Latin graces, and (which might behove,
 Methinks, the lips of Jove) 80
 The vowell'd flights of Greek sublimity:
 Unto all these, at thy persuasion, I
 Added the flowers that are the brag of Gaul,
 And speech that newborn Italy withal

¹ Divided (or divisible) in two, shared equally.

² Doubtless at Horton.

Pours with perverted dialect in that tongue
 Which still of raids barbarian testifies;
 What mysteries, too, the Hebrew harpist¹ sung; 85
 And last, all Heav'n or Mother Earth may bear,
 Or betwixt these, the interambient air—
 What wave and restless ocean's plain conceal:
 All these if I but ask thou wilt reveal.
 Comes Science, fair to look to, her form divine 90
 Disrob'd of cloud. thus bared, her glorious eyes
 She inclines for kisses—unless my mind display
 Disrelish—unless their gust might prove malign.
 Now go, and heap you wealth, to match with mine,
 Ye who prefer (of senseless fools the pride!)
 Austria's ancestral wealth, or empire wide
 Of Incas! —More, could sire to son assign 95
 His gifts to finish, saving heaven alone,
 Were Jove the giver? Or had Phaethon
 Gifts more choice-worthy from his Sire (if they
 Had but been safe!), who gave his youthful son
 World-lights, Hyperion's car, the reins of Day,
 The diadem that shone
 Redundant of his coruscating ray? 100

Thus I, ev'n I, least part of the scholars' throng,
 Shall sit 'mid ivy-crowns and laurels proud;
 Nor mix the common rout obscure among,
 But shall, from eyes profane, my footsteps shroud!
 Begone, ye wakeful Cares! Hence, Murmurings! 105
 Hence, thou wry goatish glance keen Envy flings!
 Nor bring thy venomous brawls, fell Slander, here!
 Me, brood most foul, ye have no power to harm!
 Nor am within your jurisdiction's sphere;
 But scap'd, with breast secure against alarm
 Of viperous fangs, I on my way shall go
 The more elate. But since I ne'er could know, 110

¹ Doubtless in reference to the 'Psalms of David', which M. translated

Dear Father, how for thy deserts I may
Make recompense—with deeds thy boons repay—
May't e'en suffice if with good heed I keep
Thy listed Gifts in mind, character'd¹ deep!

EPILOGUE

O Verses, pastime of my youthful days,
If ye eternally dare hope to live
And see the light, and so your lord survive
(If dark Oblivion drag you not down to dwell
In gloom Tartarean!), haply will this praise
Of mine uptreasure, and the example tell
Of that dear Father's name which ye rehearse
To unborn ages in immortal verse.

¹ *charáctēr'd*, as in *Com* 530

BOOK OF SILVAE, VII

(Date 1638 or 1639 Age Thirty or Thirty-one.)

GIOVANNI SALZILLI was a shining light among the hundreds of glittering Italian poetasters who met together in Clubs or Academies such as those that Manso founded.

He contributed sonnets, canzoni, a canzonetta, &c.—twenty-two pages of them—to a volume of poems by members of the Academy of the Fantastics, published in Rome in 1637 and dedicated to Cardinal Cesarini—and with a fulsome compliment, or flashlight into the future, he presented Milton, during his Italian tour, with four lines of Latin Elegiac verse in which he extolled him above Homer, Virgil, and Tasso.

Perhaps Salzilli was not so foolish as Milton seems to have supposed. He was apparently a young man who suffered from some chronic illness, so that a cynic might remark that the ‘lumping measure’ in which Milton responded to the compliment, was a little unfortunate. It was intended, of course, as an ironical disclaimer. Milton employs *Scazontes*, after the Greek poet Hipponax—that is to say, regular iambic trimeter up to the last foot in the verse, when a spondee or trochee produces the effect, in Masson’s apt phrase, ‘as of coming to the last step of a stair with the wrong emphasis’. Fully to produce this effect, the fifth or penultimate foot must be an iambus; Milton has not strictly followed this rule.

Poor Salzilli’s compliment is reciprocated in kind. When he is restored to health, Milton tells him, he will *set the Thames on fire*—or at any rate, moderate the Tiber, which will no longer rush on in its inconsiderate fashion, but

rather will his heaving waters’ flow
Hereafter seek in better sort to sway,
Far as the salt realms of Portumnus’ Bay!

Which is as much as to say, I suppose, that it will not go on flowing tumidly like the muse of a fulsome panegyrist!

To Salzilli(Roman Poet During his Indisposition.)¹

O MUSE of mine, that though on halting feet
 Art fain to drag thyself along, and go
 With gait of Vulcan slow—
 Nor deem'st such progress in due place less meet
 For pleasance than those decent ankles neat
 Of fair-hair'd Deiopeia² when of yore
 Queen Juno's golden Couch of State before, Lat 5
 With steps altern she mov'd melodiously—
 Come, prithee, to Salzilli bear reply
 In few: To him who holds too dear my song,
 And causeless doth the great Immortals wrong,
 This sooth, then, Milton says,
 Who, London-nurs'd,³ hath quitted in these days 10
 His home-nest in that region of the Pole
 Where the Winds' Worst, unskilful to control
 The raging of his lungs, drives furiously
 His team of panting gusts 'neath open sky:

Now, since to Italy's rich fields he came
 To view her cities proud, of fame well-seen, 15
 Her men, and genius of her learned youth,
 He greeteth thee, Salzilli, and in truth
 Wisheth thee all things good, and thy worn frame
 To hale restor'd of that deep-seated spleen
 That doth thy reins infest
 And hath misplanted in thy vitals been,
 Breathing her curs'd contagion through thy breast; 20

¹ Cowper's Note (prefixed to his translation of this ode) says "The original is written in a measure called Scazon which signifies limping; and the measure is so denominated, because, though in other respects Iambic, it terminates with a Spondee, and has consequently a more tardy movement. The reader will immediately see that this property of the Latin verse cannot be imitated in English."

² *Georg* iv. 333, &c, *Æn* i. 65, &c

³ v. Spenser, *Prothal*, 'London, my most kindly nurse'.

Nor thee the more for this remembrance spares:
 'Thine elegant Roman lips breathe Lesbian airs.

Sweet heav'n-sent Health, Hebe's twin-sister true,
 And Phoebus ('Healer' wouldst thou hear more fain?—
 Thou that art now become, the Python slain, 25
 Of all Earth's maladies the fear and bane)
 Admit Salzilli of thy priesthood due!

Oakgroves of Faunus,¹ Hills where dewes respire
 Distilment rich,² where mild Evander³ dwells,
 Let every healing herb within your dells
 Who in the opening of her leaves excels,
 Endeavour now to be the first to ease
 This sickness of your Bard! Restor'd with these 30
 To his lov'd Muses, he shall sing to please
 With his delightful lay the neighbouring leas
 Till Numa's self admire—
 Numa, who couch'd in thickest shades recline⁴ 35
 In endless ease and bliss that ne'er can tire,
 Upon his lov'd Egeria rests his eyne.

Then, e'en the tumid⁵ Tiber, with that lay
 Inchanting sooth'd, will seek to prosper aye
 The farmer's harvest hopes, nor run loose-rein'd
 Upon the left hand coursing unrestrain'd
 The sepulchres of Kings to overthrow;
 But rather will his heaving waters' flow
 Hereafter seek in better sort to sway 40
 Far as the salt realms of Portumnus'⁶ Bay!

¹ On the Aventine near Rome.

² 'with vinous dewes'—Cowper

³ Legend. Founder of Pallantium on the Palatine—Æn. viii 51.

⁴ Cp. 'As they sat recline' (*P L.* iv. 333).

⁵ 'Tumid', Cowper. cp *Hor Od* i. ii 13–20.

⁶ Or Portunus, god of harbours, who had a temple at Ostia.

BOOK OF SILVAE, VIII

(Date 1639. Age Thirty-one.)

'At Naples I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on friendship. During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard. he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure he gravely apologized for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion.'

Thus writes Milton in his *Defensio Secunda* (Bohn translation), and included among the Testimonies prefixed to his Latin poems there are two lines in Latin given him by Manso, playing epigrammatically upon the *Anglus Angelus* legendary *mot* of Pope Gregory. 'Were but your creed like your mind, form, grace, face, and morals, then you would not be Anglic only, but, in faith, Anglic.' In his *Epitaphium Damonis* Milton describes two cups that had been given to him by Manso, which, on his return from Italy, he was looking forward to showing Diodati. These had been decorated with carvings or chasings by Manso himself, and with such alternate designs of oriental and classic subjects as to seem almost uncannily prophetic of Milton's genius and development.

This hundred-hexameter-line acknowledgement of Milton for Manso's courtesy and kindness was written while Milton was still at Naples.

Milton writes with the most cordial spontaneity. He feels very grateful to Manso, thoroughly appreciates the honour that has been done him, a complete stranger and obscure commoner, by the distinguished Italian Marquis of Villa, Lord of Bisaccio and Panca, munificent patron of philosophy, literature, and the arts. The extreme of praise which he lavishes is only qualified, not restricted, by the tactful mastery of art. Milton genuinely venerated the man who had befriended Tasso and Marini, together with many other necessitous poets. 'Tasso,' writes Masson, 'in the strange madness that came over him in his manhood, clouding his beautiful mind,

but leaving it still capable of the noblest poetry, had been led, in his wanderings over Italy, to Manso's door at Naples (1588). Manso, then in his twenty-eighth year, while Tasso was in his forty-fifth, had received the illustrious unfortunate, had kept him in his splendid villa at Naples and in his country house at Bisaccio, had tended him in his fits of gloom, and soothed him in those moments when the frenzy was at its strongest, and the air around him was full of visions and voices, and he would call on Manso to look and listen . . . hardly less intimate . . . had been his friendship with Marini (born 1569) . . . who 'had also been a frequent guest at Manso's villa, had been protected by him, and served in many ways; and, when Marini died in 1625 . . . the charge of . . . erecting his monument was left to Manso'.

According to Janus Nicius Erythraeus's biographical portraits of contemporary celebrities, Manso's humility was sometimes rather excessive,¹ and in view of the compliment that Milton pays him concerning his hair, it is disconcerting to read

nor was he less obedient if he were ordered to snatch
from his head the perwig with which he concealed his baldness

The revels in humility in which the aged Marquis participated at the club of the Blessed Virgin would scarcely have commended themselves to Milton, and, no doubt, as they walked and talked in the streets, but little mention was made of such quasi-religious ceremonies. There were other Clubs, if Manso had thought of giving Milton the entrée to a Club—Clubs of Manso's own founding: the *Ozzosi* (or 'Idlers') and the *Dei Nobili*, the latter for the education of the young Neapolitan gentry in manly arts and exercises; where, according to Masson, the 'old nobleman would be gay as the youngest present, joining even in their frolics'—which were different in kind, I suppose, from those commanded by the Master of the Revels at the Blessed Virgin, where the 'Christian virtue' of humility, as Erythraeus calls it, appears to have become vitiated into absurdity.

There was little of such humility in the heart of Milton, however, when he wrote his eulogy, which even when it is most complimentary, is never absurd. He acknowledges the honour done him by

¹ For a long passage, in this connexion, from the 'Pinacotheca', see Walter MacKellar's *The Latin Poems of John Milton* (Oxford University Press), p. 329.

the Maecenas of Tasso and Marini. But how much (he implies) has Manso himself been honoured, by the same token! The benefit will be repaid a hundredfold. Tasso and Marini will confer upon him the reflected glory of their immortality, and he also, Milton himself, is going to be a poetic sun to Manso's patronizing moon. He announces that he is going to write a great epic. The rebellion of Milton's subconscious pride is pacified by the efficacy of his art. And not merely his egotistic feeling, but his patriotic pride also. England, he implies, excels in the poets it has produced.

Mansus has been highly praised by many critics, especially by Coleridge—that essentially discerning critic—even by Dr. Johnson, who was so prejudiced against Milton. Tillyard, who holds it to be both qualitatively and technically the best of Milton's Latin poems, has described its merits very fully and effectively.

Autobiographically, its most significant passage is at the end; where the very secret of Milton is disclosed, the secret that he had imparted in his letter to Diodati the desire—so integrally allied with his altruistic feeling—for immortal fame. This desire, or positive obsession, as it emphatically was, is manifested again in *Lycidas*, where Milton soothes the doubt that his achievement and its enjoyment may be frustrated by untimely death. In *Mansus* he imagines himself basking in the glowing consciousness of his fame in heaven, while he contemplates its earthly reflection.

To Manso

Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa, is most highly celebrated among the Italians not only for his talents in the pursuit of literature but also for military valour. It was to him that Torquato Tasso's Dialogue on Friendship was addressed; for he was a very close friend of Tasso, who celebrated him among the nobles of Campania in his poem called *The Conquest of Jerusalem* (Bk. xx)

Fra cavalier magnanimo e cortese
Risplende il Manso.

He treated the author during his stay in Naples with the utmost kindness, and showed him many marks of courtesy. His guest, therefore, to avoid the appearance of ingratitude, sent him this poem before he left the city.

Now meditates new strains Pieria's Muse
 To praise thee, Manso, who among the quire
 'That Phoebus doth inspire,
 Art famous. Worthier of such favour none
 Hath the god reckon'd, since Etruria's son,
 Maecenas, and the ash of Gallus¹ pyre!
 Thou (if this breeze prevail, my Muse's plea) Lat. 5
 'Mid victor ivy-crowns and bays shalt use
 To sit. 'Tis long, mutual affinity
 With mighty Tasso's join'd hath grav'n thy name
 Upon the records of immortal fame.
 Next, the sage Muse Marini dulcet-voiced
 Trusted to thee; in thee he too rejoiced: 10
 Foster-sire of the prolix song he pours
 Of gods Assyrian and their soft amours—²
 Song that Italia's maids did much bemuse.
 Dying, to thee alone his fated dust
 He left, his latest vows alone to thee!
 Nor didst thou fail thy friend who placed his trust 15
 In thy fond truth: Marini's features set
 In labour'd bronzework smile at us. And yet
 All's not enough; nor was thy high concern
 For both these poets ended with the urn:
 But since to snatch them both from Orcus' jaws
 Unhurt, thou didst with all thy spirit yearn
 (Elusive of the Fatal Sisters' laws
 Ravenous), thou didst portray their birth, their course 20
 Of life 'neath changeful stars, their native force,
 Their gifts of mind—rivalling the Carian³ who
 Æolian Homer's life divinely drew.

Hence, Manso, I who thee as sire revere,
 In Clío's and great Phoebus' name present 25

¹ Corn Gallus, of Gaul, 66–26 B.C., friend of Virgil, Ovid, and Augustus; first R. prefect of Eg. but recalled in disgrace for unknown reasons, he fell on his sword ² *L'Adone* (of Venus and Adonis = Ishtar and Tammuz)

³ This 'Life' is not now attributed to Herodotus.

Prayers for thy health through many a happy year.
 Although, of unripe years, my steps I bent
 From Hyperborean zone to sojourn here,
 Thou of thy noble mind wilt ne'er refuse
 For too remote, my Muse,
 Which sparely nurtur'd 'neath the freezing Bear,
 Hath fear'd not (overbold, perchance!) to fly
 Throughout the cities of thine Italy.

We, too, have swans¹ that on our River's breast 30
 Ourselves through night's dark watches fluting seem
 To have heard where Thames, drawing his silver stream
 From urns crystalline, with effusion wide
 Imbathes his sea-green locks in ocean's tide.
 Nay, once these selfsame shores our 'Tityrus'² press'd!
 No race barbarian we; nor are we thought 35
 Unprofitable to the Muse, although
 Our coasts that lie beneath the furrowing Plough
 Wintry Bootes' livelong night endure.
 Ourselves with orisons have Phoebus sought,
 And golden, bearded ears to Phoebus brought,
 With yellowing apples heap'd in baskets high,
 And crocus breathing exhalation pure! 40
 Nay more—unless, perchance, that bruit hath been
 Nois'd something idly of antiquity—³
 'Twas we who sent those maiden quires elect
 From out the Druid sect
 Of venerable Bards, who at the feasts
 Of Britain's gods would sacrifice as priests
 And deeds of bold emprise, and heroes sing!
 Hence, too, the Grecian maids, whenas they ring
 Their altars round with festal carolling
 (As they are wont to do in Delos green!), 45

¹ Doubtless a reference to Shakespeare ('sweet swan of Avon') and Spenser (*Prothal*)

² Spenser's name for Chaucer (*Sheph. Cal* and *Col. Clout*).

³ Herod iv. 35, &c.

With joyous lays Loxo commemorate
 (Corineus' child!), Upis, who sang of Fate,
 And Hekaerge of the yellow hair:
 With Britain's woad were stain'd their bosoms bare!¹

And so, high-fortun'd Sire, in every clime
 Where'er the fame of Tasso's vast renown 50
 Shall be remember'd, and, to brilliance grown,
 Marini's honours wax through endless time,
 Thine often praise on lips of men shall roam,
 Till one shall say: Apollo found a home,
 Willing, with thee, and that the Muses came
 As handmaids to thy door!
 Less willing—fugitive from heav'n—the same
 Apollo sought the abode, and wide demesne 55
 Of King Admetus (loath, though he before
 The host of mighty Hercules had been),
 Only whene'er the god had fain be rid
 The boist'rous herdsmen's clamourings, he went
 Mild Chiron's cave illustrious to frequent, 60
 Irriguous fields and green-roof'd woods amid;
 Where by Peneius' stream, 'neath holm-oak shade,
 To the lute's murmur, by the entreaty sway'd
 Of his fond friend, he oft would soothe the long
 Hard labours of his banishment with song.
 Then reel'd the banks. Then the deep chasm's abyss 65
 Downward to his nethermost boulders stirr'd; the brow
 Of Cæta nodded, and did somewhat miss
 The burden of massy woods that wont to bow
 His shoulders; from their native Hills uprent,
 The mountain ashes quickly gliding came:
 At those new songs grew spotted lynxes tame.²

Heav'n-belov'd Sire, O thou whose birth upon, 70
 Jove's perfect justice, Hermes (Maia's child),

¹ Ibid.² Virg. *Ecl.* viii. 3.

With Phoebus' gentle light must needs have shone;
 For if high heav'n had not upon thee smil'd
 From birth, how hadst thou gotten to thy ward
 So excellent a Bard?
 Hence, gently flowering, turns thine age to spring;
 Hence, too, thy living years make marchandise 75
 Of long life's thread on Æson's spindles wound,
 Keeping unfall'n thy forehead's dignities;
 Hence that ripe wit and mind mature and sound.
 O, should my fortune e'er such patron bring—
 So skill'd to adorn the sons of Phoebus found—
 If I recall, to grace the songs I sing, 80
 Britain's old kings and Arthur¹ marshalling wars
 E'en i' the world beneath—if e'er I tell
 Of the Table's Fellowship invincible:¹
 Heroes great-soul'd—if I with Britain's Mars
 (So may the Muse her inspiration give!)
 The embattl'd Saxon squares to havock rive—
 Ah, when my songful life has fetch'd her round, 85
 When ripe of years to Death I pay my dues,
 He bending o'er my dying bed shall stand,
 While tears his eyes suffuse,
 Content if in his ear 'Be true', I say! 90
 Then gently in a little urn he'll lay
 My limbs, relax'd by Death's discolouring hand—
 Ay, haply then he will of marble too
 My living features hew,
 And for my hair the Paphian myrtle braid,
 Or leaves of laurel from Parnassus' glade;
 But I shall rest, in dreamless slumber laid.

And last (if any faith the just requite 95
 With treasure in heav'n uplaid) if I aspire,
 With toil and mind unstain'd and virtue's fire,
 Uplift, where all the Saints in bliss unite,

¹ Malory, xxi 7; *ibid.* ii. 1-2. Arthur is said to be still living in Fairy-land.

And view from regions veil'd to mortal sight
These rites'¹ fulfilment (all that fates allow),
I smiling then, with total mind serene
And forehead glowing with celestial sheen,
Shall in high heav'n sublime contentment know.

100

¹ 'These rites . . . I shall survey'—Cowper.

BOOK OF SILVAE, IX

(Date: Autumn 1639, or Winter 1639-40. Age Thirty or Thirty-one.)

MILTON's Italian tour, with which this poem is so closely connected, was probably the happiest and the most influential experience of his life. Doubly furnished, with letters of introduction and with classical learning, he left England in April 1638. On his way, in Paris, he was entertained by Lord Scudamore, who was the English joint-ambassador with the Earl of Leicester at the court of Louis XIII. It was Lord Scudamore who introduced him to the learned Dutchman, Hugo Grotius, and when, after visiting Genoa, Leghorn, and Pisa, he made a two-months' stay at Florence, he formed the most cordial acquaintanceships with several of the leading *literati* of that delightful city. There is a reminiscence of its country-side in *Paradise Lost*, in the famous simile:

Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In *Vallambrosa*, where th' *Etrurian* shades
High overarcht' imbower

Englishmen of complex and sensitive natures are usually more at ease in the company of members of the Latin or Slavonic races than with their own countrymen. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that such a nature as Milton's should have shed, as it did, the exterior of its reserve, expanding flower-like in association with the genial Italian nobles and men of letters, who, for their part, responded with a sort of delighted enthusiasm, as it seems from the many published expressions of their regard and admiration,¹ which also is no surprising circumstance, since Milton's qualities of personal charm as a young man must have been irresistible. It was, indeed, a pleasant society for the young traveller, in a very congenial country.

It is, however, the 'bright day that brings forth the adder'; and in sunny Italy, as in no less sunny Spain, the Inquisition flourished in darkness. The Club of the Blessed Virgin practised its uproarious humilities, and the Club of the Fantastics indulged in its exuberant dominoes, with that Horror in the background. The great Galileo lay languishing in his Papal prison; and Milton, during his stay in

¹ In Prefaces to Milton's Latin poems, entries in the minute-books of Italian Academies, and personal letters.

Florence, visited him there—an experience which must have had its due influence in inflaming his mind and, when the time came, his polemical pen in the battle against superstition. He was not to be repressed, like the aged astronomer, and although he says he only gave his opinions when they were invited, he let them roam in that country, under the shadow of the spiritual dictatorship, at his peril; as also, doubtless, to the great consternation of his Italian friends such as Manso, whose embarrassment is so clearly reflected in the remark that he made at Milton's departure.

In Rome, where, after leaving Florence, Milton spent another two months—or nearly two—his 'musings amid the ruins of the Eternal City' (as Masson puts it) were diversified by learned and distinguished social intercourse, and by such pleasures as that of hearing at a concert in the palace of Cardinal Barberini the famous singer, Leonora Baroni, to whom he seems to have lost—or, at any rate, *lent*—his romantic heart.

He proceeded to Naples, intending subsequently to cross over to Sicily and go on to Greece. But news had arrived of the defiance by the Scottish people of Charles and Laud, and the consequent imminence of war. He determined to return home, thinking it 'base to be travelling at my ease for intellectual culture while my fellow-countrymen at home were fighting for liberty'.

However, he did not start at once, but, with an overcast mind, returned to Rome for yet another two-months' stay, and now, in consequence of the free way in which he had expressed his views, he came under the observation of some English Jesuits, against whom he had been warned that they would try to entrap him into the hands of the Papal police. Escaping this danger, he revisited Florence, much to the delight of his Florentine friends, and remained there for, again, two months before leaving for England, as he writes some years afterwards,¹ with the most poignant sensations of uneasiness.

All this time Diodati, his beloved friend, had never really been absent from his mind, although they had never corresponded. It has appeared, indeed, in earlier remarks, how remiss they usually were in corresponding. The failure on this occasion cannot be laid to the charge of Diodati, even had it been possible in the circumstances to have arranged a fixed postal address, since

¹ In a letter to the Florentine noble, Carolo Deodati, April 1647

Diodati died in August 1638, three or four months after Milton left England.

23 June 1638. *Isobel, wife to John Deodate.*

10 Aug 1638. *Mrs. Philadelphia Deodate.*

27 Aug. 1638. *Mr. Charles Deodate.*

These are melancholy entries, discovered by the antiquarian, Colonel J. L. Chester, in the parish register of St Anne, Blackfriars, London. Charles himself, his sister (?), and his sister-in-law, who had thus died successively within three weeks of each other, were probably the victims of some local epidemic.

Masson thinks that Milton might conceivably have heard that Diodati was dead during his second visit to Florence, and sometime in that period certainly, Milton made an excursion—a journey of about forty miles—to Lucca, the Diodati family's place of origin. But the alternative date given by Masson appears to be the more likely. This is June 1639, and the place, Geneva, where, during his homeward journey, Milton met the celebrated theologian Jean Diodati, Charles's uncle. For if the news of Diodati's death had reached him in Florence, Milton would probably have mentioned the incidence of this most crushing blow in the passage in *Epitaphium Damonis* where he refers to Diodati's descent from the Lucca family, and to his own delightful musings beside the Arno.

To all these, when I no grief did apprehend
The dewy moon sung burden

He returned to England in August 1639, after being absent for some fifteen months, and 'for some time afterwards', writes Masson, he 'seems to have gone about, between London and Horton, thinking of little else than Charles Diodati's melancholy death' (and, I may interpolate, feeling very blank after the social excitements of Italy). . . . 'At length his musings over it took poetic form, and sometime in the autumn of 1639, or in the winter of 1639-40, he wrote *Epitaphium Damonis*.'

These musings of a stunned and wellnigh broken heart 'took poetic form'; and yet one feels in reading the poem how raw they still were. The expression is too poignant. It does not conform to Wordsworth's poetic principle of 'emotion remembered in tranquillity'. The verses are in the nature of desolate self-agitations, grief's inexorable self-lacerations. The imagery is rather a guise

than a transmutation. It does not achieve that transcendent beauty—which Shelley attained, for instance, in his *Adonais*—which is perfect expression, release, balm, and cure. Milton's grief is inconsolable. It breaks through the poetry, and sometimes nearly breaks it up. Art cannot cope with such a sorrow as this. In its dun, desolate atmosphere, Milton's pinions droop ineffectual, while he continually struggles to ascend.

Yet the *Epitaphium* is very beautiful; and towards the end Milton obtains, or seems to obtain, some surcease—perhaps, through exhaustion. For a space it appears that he escapes, forgets himself—which, in his extraordinary egotistic way, is also to remember himself—and diverges into the subject of his ambition.

This is characteristic of the peculiar propensity of Milton's mind towards abrupt emotional transitions—that propensity which, in more striking operation, was noticed by Lord Macaulay when he says that 'his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture'. There is an instance in *The Apology for Smectymnuus*, where, as it were, a volcano, or 'vehement vein throwing out indignation or scorn', is converted into a Celestial fountain.

The phenomenon is the effect of an emotional breaking-point; but it is not associated with any impression of artistic rupture. The instance in the *Epitaphium* occurs after its most poignant passage. After harrowing reminiscences of Diodati, Milton describes his attempt to pipe in a new strain and loftier measure. In the passage that follows, this new strain is revealed as being the ambitious patriotic epic previously referred to in *Mansus*.

By the loftier measure, which proved unmanageable, Tillyard believes that Milton implied merely English instead of Latin verse. I suggest that it signified not only English but English blank verse, instead of Latin or of English rhyme.¹

This decision—a very crucial one, indeed—to write his Epic in English (and accordingly, as it was an Epic, in English blank verse) was taken, therefore, during Milton's Italian sojourn, of which it was the most important fruit, and in *The Reason of Church Government* he defines his motives for following the 'resolution which

¹ It is noteworthy here that Tillyard's *Milton* contains a most illuminating exposition of the Renascent *Pleiade* theory and practice, which Milton followed, in the imitation of Classic models when writing English verse.

Ariosto follow'd against the persuasions of Bembo, to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end, that were a toylsome vanity, but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own Citizens throughout this Iland in the mother dialect'.

As to the *Epitaphium* itself, Tillyard judges for very similar reasons to those which I have propounded, that it 'does not succeed as a whole'. He declares, nevertheless, that it 'shows as masterly and individual a use of Latin as *Mansus*, and the grave sweetness of Milton is present throughout. Moreover, the first 123 lines are almost faultless, and unique in Milton from the peculiar tenderness of tone in which they are written.'

He thinks that there is 'something hyperbolical and morbid' about the 'final description, Diodati's reception in heaven. . . . Milton seems to recall with a false ardour feelings which he has outgrown'

The 'feelings which he has outgrown' refer to the contention, very plausibly advanced in Tillyard's *Milton*, that at one time Milton regarded chastity as a positive virtue possessing magical properties, and it may, indeed, be so—that Milton both entertained this belief and afterwards outgrew it. On the other hand, it is certain that such an ecstatic reward as he imagines for Diodati in respect of his 'youth unstain'd' is a conception arising from that basic and crucial authority of the Bible, as it was to Milton, which he never outgrew, nor in this point was it possible for him to abstract the literal Scriptural sense into a humaner synthesis, as he managed to do in the case of the 'misattended words of Christ' in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, even though he regarded the source of this conception, in one way, as dramatic 'And the Apocalypse of Saint John is the majestick image of a high and stately Tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn Scenes and Acts with a seven-fold Chorus of halleluja's and harping symphonies.' (*The Reason of Church Government.*)

With the exception of *Ad Joannem Rousum, Epitaphium Damonis* was Milton's final poem in Latin: the language that was so intimately associated with memories of his beloved friend, as also with many literary and poetic excursions of his youth—the spring-time of his ambition, now breaking up to be changed into hurtling

storm and increasing darkness; and I think that the evil times which were to follow were already adumbrated in his consciousness, since in moods of great emotional stress and powerful perturbation oncoming conditions and atmospheres are liable to influence the mind:

Without, the felon South to shreds doth blow
The world, while o'er the elm his thunder broods!

Yet in his long threnody Milton rises at the close, in that lofty passage about Diodati's reception in heaven, as if he were suddenly swept upward, with a forced and almost wildly ecstatic effect—recoiling, as one may imagine, on this the first of many unendurable occasions, from the imminent, threatening apparition of Despair!

The Lament for Damon

Thyrsis and Damon, shepherds of the same neighbourhood, had followed the same pursuits, and had been friends from childhood of the most intimate sort. Thyrsis, while abroad for the pleasure of his mind, heard the news of Damon's death. Afterward, returning home, and finding it true, he bewails himself and his loneliness in this ode. The character of Damon is here meant for Charles Diodati, sprung on his father's side from Lucca, a city of Tuscany; in other respects, an Englishman, whose intellect, learning, and other shining virtues show him to have been in life a youth pre-eminent.

MUSES of Himera's Spring,¹
Who Daphnis² held, and Hylas'³ memory, dear—
With Bion's⁴ many days lamented bier—
Come, through Thames' towns an air Sicilian sing:
Sing Thyrsis'⁵ cries pour'd forth with heavy cheer,
Each moan of woe and every whisper'd tear;
The plaints he search'd, withal, each cavern'd nook, Lat. 5
Sequester'd grove, river and gadding brook,
Sorrowing for Damon reft him; nor would spare
Deep night his griefs, but roam'd lone regions bare.

¹ Hímēra, on the N. river of that name.

² A shepherd boy of Ida, turned by a jealous nymph to stone.

³ Hylas, s. of the Dryop k, carried under the waters of a spring by a nymph.

⁴ The famous pastoral poet.

⁵ Milton.

Twice with green ear the rising stalk 'gan swell,
 The granges twice their golden harvests tell, 10
 Since that predestin'd Morn
 Unto the Shades below had Damon borne—
 Nor Thyr sis come! True is, him overlong
 In Tuscan city stay'd soft charm of song.
 But when a mind full furnish't and the thought
 Of his neglected flock him homeward brought, 15
 He then, when 'neath the accustom'd elm he sate
 And felt as ne'er before his lost friend's fate,¹
 'Gan thus unload his measureless sorrow's weight:
*Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!*²

Ay me, what Powers frequenting earth shall I
 Invoke, what Powers that in high heaven reside—
 Powers that have rapt thy life so ruthlessly? 20
 Canst quit me thus? Can thy clear spirit be fled
 Unsung, to fellow all the obscure Dead?
 Not so may Hermes make arbitrement,
 But rather shall, with that gold sceptre-head
 Which doth the Souls divide,
 Thee to a troop judg'd not unworthy, guide,
 Far from the songless herd ignoble pent. 25
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Yet know, whatever fate may hold in store—
 Unless, perchance, some wolf prevent my sight³
 (And speech extinguish quite)—
 Thou shalt not wholly moulder in the grave
 Unwept, but high-establisht honour have,
 To live upon the lips of many a swain. 30

¹ 'Then 'twas his lot then all his loss to know'—Cowper.

² For the twofold origins of this refrain, v. *Ecl.* vii. 44 ('Ite domum pastri'), and *Ov Met.* xii. 576, etc. ('Non vacat Auroræ'). Of Dawn's Lament for Memnon.

³ The Romans believed that if a wolf, on meeting with a man, saw him first, the man would be struck dumb. Cp. *Ecl.* ix. 53.

Unto thy favouring angel cheerly they
 (From Daphnis next) their orisons will pay;
 Cheerly to thee (the next from Daphnis) raise
 Their due concent of praise
 So long as in our country leas and lawns
 Pales¹ shall take delight, delight the Fauns—
 If booteth aught to have cherish'd gods of yore;
 If aught, thy zeal for arts of Pallas' lore;
 If booteth aught a songful friend to gain.

Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now! 35

Dead shepherd, thine this meed, these sureties dear;
 But what shall me at bitter end abide?
 What single, fond compeer
 Will cleave as thou (so faithful) to my side?
 Or who (as ofttest thou) with me will stay
 In pitiless frosts where rime thick-teemed lies,
 Or singeing noons when parch'd the green herb dies? 40
 Who aid, perchance, when I
 Must lions huge at range of spear assay,
 Or scare the greedy wolves from sheepfolds high?
 Who lull with speech and lyre the lingering day?

Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Who shall unlock my heart henceforth, or show 45
 To swage the heavy wound of biting cares?
 Who with commercings sweet
 The livelong watches of the night shall cheat,
 When hiss i' the genial glow the juicy pears
 And crackle of chestnuts all the hearthstone floods?
 Without, the felon South to shreds doth blow
 The world, while o'er the elm his thunder broods.

Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now! 50

When summer hours on noonday axle glide;
 When in the oak-tree shade
 Great Pan to rest is laid;

¹ Presiding deity of flocks and shepherds (uncertain if god or goddess).

When seek their watery haunts the nymphs once more;
 When swains lie close; 'neath hedge the plowmen snore—
 Who shall thy graces lost to me restore, 55
 Laugh, polish'd wit, salt, with true Attick vy'd?
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Companionless, the fields, the farms, I rove,
 And where the valley's bowers
 With thickest-woven branchings dark the grove,
 Wait night. O'erhead, the gale moans with the showers; 60
 Thro' shuddering dusk the shipwrackt forest lowers.
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Woe's me! what wanton growths my fields o'ertwine—
 My late trim fields! How droops with mildew blast
 My ripening corn! On the unwedded vine 65
 Forlorn the clusters waste;
 Nor please the myrtles—irks the shepherd's hook—
 The mournful flock up to their master look.
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Hark! to the hazels Tityrus' challenge rings.
 Alpheisibœus calls to mountain-ash—
 Ægon to the willows—to the river-plash 70
 Comely Amyntas: Here (they cry) are springs,
 Cool springs, and mossy turf-enamellings.
 Here breathes the West! Here to smooth waters' flow
 Arbutus interposes whisperings low.
 Stone-deaf to their pipings, the coverts gain'd, I go.
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Here Mopsus, who had chanced my homeward feet 75
 To spy—he knew the speech of all that flies:
 Mopsus, the star-gazer—What's this? (he cries),
 Thyrsis, what wicked spleen thy veins doth heat?

Art lost for love? o'erlookt by baleful star?
 Saturn brings mischief oft where shepherds are;
 His slanting lead deep in their bosom lies. 80
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Marvelling, the nymphs: What's coming to thee now?
 Thyrsis, what lack'st? Is this youth's wonted gait—
 Ire-darting eyes, crabb'd looks, and cloudy brow?
 Nay! dance and dalliance, love's incessant vow, 85
 Are youth's! Twice luckless, who has lov'd o'erlate.
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Came Hyas—Dryopé—came (whom Baucis bore)
 Mistress of measures and the lutist's art,¹
 Aeglé—but now consum'd by pride of heart—²
 Came Chloris, habitant of Chelmer's shore: 90
 Nought their soft words, kind pityings, solace me!
 Nought reck's me now that is, nor aught to be!
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Alas! the well-matcht steers i' the field that sport,
 All mutual friends by nature's bond unite; 95
 Nor will the steer one friend from his herd-mates sort:
 Jackals to provender, come troopingly;³
 Each hairy wild ass pairs in turn with each;
 The tribes of ocean with this law comply,
 For Proteus on his solitary beach
 Counts o'er by companies his ranked seals.⁴ 100
 So, 'mong wing'd fowl, though deem'd of common rate,
 The sparrow hath companion when he wheels
 Blithe-wing'd o'er all the corn-fields, roosting late:
 If Death that partner smite,
 By ditcher's reed, or hooked beak of kite,

¹ Hor. *Od.* III. ix. 10. The names here are clearly meant for real persons of M.'s acquaintance.

² Cowper's version, by some oversight, gives the description of Aeglé to Dryopé.

³ C. has 'And all his kind alike the zebra loves'. For Homer's *θῶες* v. *Il.* xiii. 104.

⁴ *Od.* iv. 411; *Georg.* iv. 436.

He seeks with friendly swerve another mate. 105
 We men, Fate-driv'n, endure a sterner life:
 Minds all estrangement—hearts distract with strife.
 Scarce, haply, shalt thou find—
 E'en out of thousands—one true kindred mind.
 Or if thy vows from Chance win late relief,
 Some day, some hour unween'd of, shall betide 110
 To snatch him from thy side,
 Leaving thee agelong—nay, eternal grief!
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdsman now!

Alas, what gadding folly drew me astray
 To visit shores I knew not of, and led
 To cross high-climbing crags, and Alpine snow?
 Was there such need to see Rome's grave¹ (although 115
 Rome were as Tityrus saw her when he left
 His flocks, his fields?)—of thee to mourn bereft,
 Who wast so pleasant, friend! How could I dream,
 Twixt thee and me so many a deep to spread—
 Woods, rocks—so many a range and roaring stream? 120
 Ah, at the end I could have else compos'd
 Thy dying eyes, thy hand in mine have clos'd,
 That last farewell to say:
 'O love me still upon thy starward way!
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdsman now!

Yet be ye sure I never shall repine, 125
 O Tuscan swains,² for memories of you,
 Dear Youths who offer at the Muses' Shrine.
 Here 'Grace' and 'Wit' were, and (a Tuscan too)
 Thou, Damon, thou whose house her founder drew
 From that old city of the Lucumo.³
 O, how transported was my mind, when I
 Outstretch'd beside cool Arno's whispering flow,
 In poplar glade, where tenderer grass doth grow, 130

¹ *Ecl.* 1. 26. ² M.'s Florentine friends. ³ Traditional Founder of Lucca.

Could violets pluck—pluck myrtles as they bend—
 Hear with Menalcas Lycidas contend!
 I, too, dar'd try, nor all displeas'd your mood,
 Methinks, since these your gifts remembrance bring:
 Winebowls, and waxbound pipes, and basketing. 135
 Did not their favourite beeches learn to bear
 My name engraven by that friendly pair¹—
 Dati—Francini, Doctor-poets good,
 Both famous, boasting both the Lydian blood?
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdsman now!

To all these, when I no grief did apprehend
 The dewy moon² sung burden, by whose light 140
 My kids alone in wattled cotes I penn'd.
 How oft, when blacken'd ash³ held all my friend,
 Unto myself I said: Now Damon sings;
 Now haply for the hare his nets he flings—
 Now weaves him osiers for their several use.
 Thus all I did, so sure, of future muse, 145
 My winged wishes came
 To seize, and as of present time, did frame:
 Come, friend! What, busy now? If nought impede,
 Shall we go forth and for a while be laid
 To rest, recline 'neath the clear-singing shade
 By Colne waters,⁴ or lands of Cassivellaun?⁵
 Thou shalt recount the virtuous juices drawn 150
 From thy choice simples—humble saffron, or
 Fronds of the hyacinth and hellebore,
 And all the herbs that fen of thine doth breed,
 With Med'cine's 'arts that heal'.
 Go rot, ye 'herbs'!—and rot, ye 'arts that heal'—
Grasses that could not work your master's weal!

¹ *Ecl.* x. 53.² *Georg.* iii. 337.³ *Æn.* iv. 633.⁴ The Colne, flowing between Midx and Bucks., passes near Horton on its way to the Thames.⁵ 'Cassibelan's gray turrets'—Cowper. A walk from Horton up the Colne would bring M. to the neighbourhood of St. Albans.

But I ('tis reckon'd since the eleventh night¹
 Just one more day), when some sublimer flight 155
 My oat was sounding, scarce had laid my lip
 To those new reeds, when they apart did slip,
 Snapping their band; whereafter they no more
 Their loftier tones could pour.
 E'en now, misgives me lest, perchance, my lay
 Presumptuously should soar. 160
 Nay, I will tell it! Woodland Songs,² give way!
Home, lambs, unfed; grief tasks your herdman now!

Of Trojan ships that rode off Richboro's strand³
 I'll sing, and of this ancient royal Isle
 Of Inogen,⁴ daughter of King Pandrasus;
 Of old Belin, Dukes Bran, Arviragus;⁵
 Next, a new Britain⁶ in Armoric land; 165
 Then, of Igraine, that was by fatal wile
 Of Arthur's birth expectant, with the guile
 Of the false Gorlois' looks and armour ta'en,
 Merlin's untruth.⁷ O last, should life remain,
 On yon old pine ye pipes will hang again—
 Forgot, how much! or for your native Muse 170
 The shrilling sound of Britain's war-pipe chuse.
 But what? Too much for one all things to be,
 Or hope—'twere guerdon great enough for me,
 Fame great enough: for aye unknown I'll bide,
 Inglorious quite to all the world beside,
 So fairhair'd Ouse, and they who Alan⁸ drink, 175
 All Humber's⁹ whirlpools—Trent's tree-bosom'd brink—
 Thou, chief, my Thames—and Tamar's ore-stain'd urn—
 And utmost Orkney's waves of me shall learn.

Home, lambs, unfed, grief tasks your herdman now!

¹ *Ecl.* viii 39.

² *Ecl.* x. 63.

³ Legend. history of Britain which M. proposed to work up into an epic.

⁴ Or Imogen

⁵ v. Geoffr. of Monmouth.

⁶ v. Wm. of Malmesbury.

⁷ v. G. of M. and Malory.

⁸ In orig. 'Alaun'.

⁹ Or Severn's?

These in tough baybark I for thee did store, 180
 With wine-cups twain that Manso gave to me
 (Manso, whose fame shall be
 Not the least glory of old Naples' shore),
 Each wondrous—like their master—who had wrought
 Both them about with train of linked thought,
 Graven on either side in answering moods:
 The Red Sea middest, and odour-breathing spring, 185
 With those far coasts Arabian and woods
 A-sweat with tears of balm,
 Where Phoenix, bird divine, with rainbow wing
 (Earth's singular fowl), an azurn flame doth fling,
 While rereward to her gaze the watery calm
 Doth the glass'd image of the Dawnrise bring.
 Then vast Olympus, on the reverse hand,
 And uttermost-opening firmament expand. 190
 What! Love's cloud-painted quivers here, on high,
 And bright artillery of burning brand:
 Darts dipt i' the red-gold dye?
 He wounds not hence slight souls, the common cry,
 But throwing far abroad his blazing eyne,
 Strews through the spheres his shafts in upward line 195
 Tireless, and aimeth ne'er a lowlier blow;
 Whence, sacred minds and godlike shapes do glow.
 Thou among these (nor doth some smooth surmise
 Delude me, Damon) now most surely art;
 For whither else should wend thy single heart 200
 So heavenly mild—thy virtues' shining guise?
 How wrong to have sought in that forgetful Deep
 Thee whom no tears befit! No more I'll weep.
 Begone, ye tears! He dwells in those pure skies—
 He no less pure!—and doth our rainbow spurn;
 Where mid heroic souls and gods eterne, 205
 Ethereal streams and pleasures slake the drouth
 Of his new-purged mouth.
 Do thou, when heard thou hast heav'n's each decree,

With lucky words, calm presence, favour me,
What name soever thou wouldst rather hear—
Or Damon, or that sacred name that's dear
To all the saints, 'Diodati'. What though! 210
'Damon' thou'lt yet be to our woods below!
Since thy bright honour and thy youth unstain'd
Have equal favour gain'd,
Since savour of fleshly lust thou ne'er didst know,
Behold the honours of virginity
Reserv'd for thee on high;
Where thou, thy bright brow crown'd with flaming
gold, 215
Broad umbrage of triumphal palm shalt hold,
And evermore as guest
Of that celestial marriage-feast partake;
Where dance and song concent tempestuous make
With harpings of the blest,
When Sion's 'Rod' to phrenzied rapture brings
His high Mysterious Rites and Banquetings.

LONDON (1639-40).

BOOK OF SILVAE, X

(Date January 23rd, 1646-7. Age Thirty-seven or Thirty-eight)

THIS whimsical, half-bantering poem is an exuberant *tour d'expression*, which some critics have taken too seriously.

From one aspect, indeed, it is of serious import. It is a free and—from a stern metrologist's point of view—licentious experiment of Milton in irregularly assorted metres, suggested by a few classical Latin precedents, or by the intricate versification of the Greek choral odes: a semi-discretionary form which is explained by Milton, who loved experimenting, in a note appended to his edition of the poems

The capricious wildness of the mode, of course, is not Latin but Greek in genus, and is manifested, for instance, in the extravagant luxuriance of Pindar, whose 'Odes' and 'Hymns', together with those of Callimachus, Milton in his *Reason of Church Government* describes as 'magnifick' and deserving of imitation.

The ode is thus an informal anticipation of the unrhymed Choruses in *Samson Agonistes* (which has an explanatory preface), in which, however, Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode were discarded.

Milton had not yet altogether dispensed with the help of rhyme (which he eventually called a 'bondage'), but was graduating, with intervals of sonnet-writing, in the attainment of his matchless powers of blank verse composition. Probably his 'wings' were already sufficiently developed to function in that comparatively buoyant element, but he still needed the help of regular metrical stress.

Ad Joannem Rousium, in general, has not pleased Milton's critics and biographers. Symmons dislikes its 'irregularity of measure', for which he finds no authority 'even among the choruses of the Greek dramatists', but admits that its 'diction is pure, and, equally with its matter, eminently poetic'. Masson is non-committal. But Tillyard gives it handsome praise. It is a 'mixture', he writes, 'of stateliness and of half-humorous and urbane elegance'. After observing that it 'seems to be modelled principally on Pindar', he proceeds:

'I venture no metrical comparison, but I may record a personal impression that Milton is complete master of his new medium, that he accommodates sound to sense with the greatest skill, and that if read with due quantitative emphasis the ode reveals itself as one of the greater Latin poems, less serious than *Mansus* and the *Epitaphium Damonis*, but in completeness of achievement worthy to rank with them.'

He points out, among other interesting details in the Ode, Milton's 'loving reminiscence of the quiet days when he wrote his youthful poems, in English and Latin, and of his ecstasy in the writing when "humum vix tetigit pede"', his longing for the 'time when civil war may really cease, and culture, of whose expulsion from England he is only too conscious, may be brought back'; the doubt whether his countrymen have been 'sufficiently punished for their sins', characteristically conjoined with the 'hope that the virtuous acts of their ancestors (in the Reformation of course) may prevail with God'.

The poem was written in the following circumstances.

John Rouse (or Russe), M.A., was the Chief Librarian of the Bodleian Library; and Milton had sent in 1646, at his repeated request, a set of his published works up to date—to wit: his five pamphlets against Episcopacy, his corpus of writings advocating divorce on the grounds of constitutional incompatibility, *Areopagitica*, and *Of Education*—bound up in a single volume, together with a copy of the 1645 (Old Style) edition of his English and Latin poems. The latter volume never arrived; and Rouse begged for another copy.

In this other copy the ode, carefully written out in Italian script (whether by Milton himself or by some one else), was inserted between the English and the Latin contents, where it thus serves the purpose of an Envoy to the 'little double book in single dress', and is still to be seen, with the book itself, among the Milton exhibits in the world-famous library that is doubly investitured by learning and by time.

Into the exuberant gaiety of Milton's mind when he wrote *Ad Joannem Rousium*, politics with Miltonic incongruity intrude; as politics, in ecclesiastical guise, cropped up and intruded into the wistful imagination that created *Lycidas*, whereas in *Paradise Lost* they did not so much intrude as appear, when they did put in an

appearance therein, as the very habit almost of the writer's soul. Thus, Strophe II is diverted to the troubled state of England and especially that of Oxford (the Royalist Headquarters), at the end of the first phase of the war.

After politics, *ambition*. An inscription in Milton's autograph in the volume of pamphlets hints that the time may come when they will meet with something better than what they have hitherto encountered, ill-will and calumny. The Epode to the ode expresses, after a characteristic glance at the 'coarse-tongu'd rout', an even more sanguine hope of prosperity for the poems, in

An age more wise of heart
And ripe of brain.

At any rate, Milton was fortunate to live in an age when, even during war-time, he could find a publisher for poetry; although in his agreement for the publication of *Paradise Lost* he contracted to receive only fifteen pounds, in three instalments, from his publisher.

Although Rouse was an Oxonian, being Fellow of Oriel, his sympathies were decidedly Parliamentary, and this was very likely a contributory cause of the friendly and familiar terms on which he obviously found himself with Milton, who was incorporated as an M.A. (during the period of Rouse's librarianship) at Oxford in 1635, having graduated as an M.A. at Cambridge three years previously.

To John Rouse

On a lost volume of my poems which he desired me to send him for the second time, so that he might place it with my other works in the Public Library.

[STROPHE I]¹

MY little Book, in single vesture gay
(Though Twin, and leav'd for two),
Whose neatness doth un-studied charms display,
Transmitted long ago

¹ Since the metre of Milton's Latin ode is entirely irregular, no attempt has here been made to follow a definite metrical scheme in the English.

From almost all the bounds of England sent
 With the unhous'd Muses into banishment?
 Who will with shafts from Phoebus' quiver pierce
 This obscene winged brood, of talons fierce
 For rapine? Who this Phinean¹ plague will strive
 Afar from Thames' Muse-haunted Stream to drive? 35

[ANTISTROPHE]

Yet, little Book, though thou by perfidy,
 Or carrier's negligence,
 For once didst wander hence
 Forth from thy brothers' band—
 In whatso den or lurking-place thou be, 40
 Chafed, haply, by some tasteless Huckster's hand
 Callous and coarse—yet here
 Joy thou and have good cheer,
 Since now anew for thee
 Dawneth fresh hope that thou may'st yet make shift
 To 'scape the Lake forgetful,² and to be 45
 Oar'd by thy wings to Jove's high Courts uplift!

[STROPHE III]

Rejoice, since his especial property
 Rouse so desires
 Thou shouldest be,
 And from the full tale promis'd doth lament
 Thee wanting and for thine arrive requires! 50
 He to whom high memorials are lent
 Of famous men, within that sanctuary
 Would place thee; where
 He doth himself preside devotedly,
 Warden of deathless works—a Treasury 55

¹ Phineus, s. of Agenor, plagued by Harpies because he prophesied truth. By 'Harpies' M. means the Royalists then holding Oxford.

² The Lake of Lethé (Oblivion).

Of nobler price than fam'd Erechtheus' heir
 (Ion,¹ whom Attick Maid Creusa bare)—
 Had charge of: he that in the wealthy shrine
 Of his great Sire divine,
 Was guardian of that hoard
 Of Delphi's gifts and golden tripods stor'd!

[ANTISTROPHE]

So shalt thou go once more the Muses' dale
 Imbower'd to visit, and Apollo's fane
 In that Oxonian vale
 Which made the god disdain
 His Delos and the Fork'd² Parnassus' chain.
 High-honour'd shalt thou go, who didst obtain
 This most transcendent fate—
 For which my clever friend
 Did such entreaties send—
 Thus to be read 'mong volumes of the great
 Illustrious, who to Rome and Hellas lent
 Their antique splendour and true ornament!

[EPODE]

Thus then, my Works, ye were not all in vain,
 (Who pouring did from my lean wits proceed)
 And now, though late, I bid ye look for rest
 In calm content,
 All envy spent,
 At length, in that Elysium of the blest
 Which Hermes' favour, and the zealous heed
 Of Rouse shall give you: where
 The coarse-tongu'd rout profane may enter ne'er,
 But readers of the lewder sort depart.
 So then, perchance, our heirs hereafter born—

¹ For Ion, v Eur. *Ion*, 185, &c ; and 1145, &c

² 'Castalia's fountain and the forked Hill'—Cowper.

An age more pure of heart
And ripe of brain—
Herein shall bring to bear
An estimate more fair—
Then, o'er the tomb of Scorn, 85
By Rouse's help, a generation sane
Shall judge if aught, that merits Praise, remain.

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